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ABSTRACT

The articles in this document emphasize the positive, unique aspects of Afro-American folklore. Etta Moten Barnett concentrates on the changes in African music in response to the new geographical and cultural influences in America. Frank Suggs, Jr. describes a strategy for introducing black folklore and black music into the elementary school in an appealing way. Marcella Howell examines Joel Chandler Harris's Uncle Remus tales in the context of black folklore. Sandra Alexander discusses the scapegoat archetype in Ralph Ellison's novel, "Invisible Man." William H. Wiggins examines the folklore elements in Ellison's book and relates them to genres of the Afro-American oral tradition. Finally, Jill Weyant analyzes Charles Chesnutt's "The Conjure Woman" to further illustrate the influence of white American writers on the continuum of Afro-American folklore. (Author/EB)

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SELECTED PROCEEDINGS

OF THE

3RD ANNUAL CONFERENCE ON MINORITY STUDIES

APRIL, 1975

AFRO-AMERICAN FOLKLORE:
A UNIQUE AMERICAN EXPERIENCE

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PREFACE

GEORGE E. CARTER

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-LA CROSSE

LA CROSSE, WISCONSIN

The Third Annual Conference on Minority Studies was held at the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse, April 24 to 26, 1975. The theme for the Conference was "The Importance of Folklore in the Minority Experience." The present proceedings volume focuses only on the Afro-American experience, and the papers illustrate one basic point; namely, the unique American quality and content of Afro-American folklore. A recent article by three prominent folklorists notes:

> Here [in the Afro-American experience] is a distinctively American form of folklore, with African and European affinities, but unmistakably the product of an American experience.[1]

Very few scholars have recognized the uniquely American quality of Afro-American folklore.

When the question is asked: What is American Folklore?--the answer has come from basically two points of view. The first view tends to see folklore more as something in America, an accumulation of the various bodies of folk tradition that were imported to the country by the numerous elements which make up the American populace. In this view, American folklore is little more than the fading remnants of the old ways brought from the Old World to America.

The second view sees American folklore as an evolving cultural entity, stemming from the interplay among various groups that settled America and the distinctive elements of the American experience. The first view seeks preservation of imported traditions, ways, and values, while the second view examines the evolution of a distinct American folklore. Folklorists, individually, have arranged themselves somewhere along the continuum of these two points of view. Both points of view accept the basically pluralistic nature of American culture and American society.

In the selections provided, the authors clearly arrange themselves on the continuum mentioned earlier. Etta Moten Barnett concentrates on Afro-American music, and she states her position in terms of black music.

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[1]Richard Bauman, Roger D. Abrahams, with Susan Kalcik, "American Folklore and American Studies," *American Quarterly*, Vol. XXVIII, #3 (Bibliographic Issue, 1976), p. 362.

She pays tribute to the African heritage and influence but goes on to stress the modifications to a new geographical and cultural environment in America. Her discussion of improvisation illustrates the modifying influence in terms of Afro-American music. The end result is something new--ragtime, jazz, black opera--and is uniquely American.

Frank Suggs, Jr., provides a practical application of modifications to black folk music framed in a way that will appeal to elementary school children. At the same time, the approach of the performers stresses the unique qualities of Afro-American music. Suggs realizes the African heritage of some of the material utilized but is much more concerned with the distinct American aspects which he can use to instill positive pride in students of all ages.

Marcella Howell examines Joel Chandler Harris' Uncle Remus tales in the context of black folklore. She rejects the idea that black American folklore had no link with Africa and stresses the modification of the African storyteller tradition to the American scene by a white writer. The modification is thus distorted by Harris because of his own racial bias. The Uncle Remus character emerges as an original American character despite the distortion, and the end result is a unique American experience within the black heritage of Afro-Americans.

Sandra Alexander is concerned with the scapegoat archetype in Ralph Ellison's novel, *Invisible Man.* She notes the African legacy of the scapegoat concept, modified by Ellison to fit the Black experience in the United States. The novel is an American tragedy and, for the black American, a unique tragedy because of the influences of slavery. The primitive aspects of the novel are associated with Africa, then modified in America to fit Ellison's image of the black American experience. On the folklore continuum, Ms. Alexander clearly belongs to the uniquely American school, although she tries to contend for the universality of Ellison's story.

The folklore elements in Ralph Ellison's classic novel, *Invisible Man,* are clearly American in their origin. The Afro-American oral folklore tradition receives major attention by William H. Wiggins, and the unique qualities of the Afro-American folklore tradition receive emphasis through Wiggin's paper; in fact, he only in passing recognizes the African roots of many of the folk tales considered. Still Afro-American folklore, in Wiggin's view, is a unique American story, and he clearly belongs with that viewpoint on Afro-American folklore.

Jill Weyant, in her essay on Charles Chesnutt and *The Conjure Woman,* again uses modification of the blacks' position following the Civil War to illustrate a purely American phenomenon. The white male's relinquishing of a central family role was forecast by Chesnutt long before it actually happened, and he drew on the relationships between slave and master, and freedman and boss, to depict this happening as a part of the Afro-American folklore tradition. Ms. Weyant properly belongs with the unique American position on the continuum of Afro-American folklore; in fact, she pays no attention to African influences.

Thus, all six writers in the present volume speak to the uniquely American quality of Afro-American folklore. Some do pay tribute to lingering

African influences, but it is the American experience that really counts. Their essays further document the conclusions reached by Bauman, Abrahams, and Kalcik concerning the place of Afro-American folklore in the broader context of American folklore. The uniquely American quality of the experiences is the one thread which holds these essays together.

Folklore has been used in a variety of ways in the American experience--by some as a tool of education; as a method of social control; as an instrument of social authority; as a factor in cultural continuity; and in politics, religion, and art. Whatever the case, folklore has also been utilized in similar ways by racial minorities. In the instance of black Americans, folklore has had a unique quality of its own with its emphasis on the American scene.

Some years ago, commenting on the American experience, B. A. Botkin, one of our foremost collectors of folklore, noted:

> Folklore as we find it perpetuates human ignorance, perversity, and depravity along with human wisdom and goodness. Historically we cannot deny or condone this baser side of folklore--and yet we may understand and condemn it as we condemn other manifestations of human error.[2]

The baser side of folklore was clearly negative, and Botkin further noted that folklore, much like life itself, " . . . is animal in its origin and spiritual in its possible fruit." What came through " . . . in violent contradiction of our modern social standards, is the essential viciousness of many of our folk heroes, stories, and expressions, especially in their treatment of minorities . . ."[3] All this is not to say there were no positive elements in folklore, but rather that the negative had been stressed, and in fact is still emphasized by some writers.

Afro-American folklore specialists have turned the emphasis around in the context of the Black experience in America. The present papers illustrate this point. Previous folklorists have tended to view Afro-Americans in one of three ways, all negative: as peasants, as social problems, or as a quasiprimitive people.[4] None of the authors in the present study take these kinds of views; in fact, they are all attempting to uplift the Black experience, to dwell on the positive, and finally, to stress the unique American aspect of Afro-American folklore.

The editors wish to acknowledge the encouragement and financial assistance provided by the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse. Special appreciation is given to Chancellor Kenneth Lindner, who has been consistent in his active support of the series of conferences hosted at La Crosse. The editors also wish to thank all the participants in the Third Annual Conference on Minority Studies. Each year of the Conference the quality

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[2] B. A. Botkin, ed., *A Treasury of American Folklore* (New York, 1944), pp. xxv-xxvi.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. xxvi.

[4] Bauman et al., "American Folklore and American Studies," *American Quarterly*, Vol. XXVIII, #3, p. 365.

of the papers has improved, and the present volume would not be possible without the hard efforts of six dedicated Afro-American folklore specialists.

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AFRO-AMERICAN FOLKLORE:
A UNIQUE AMERICAN EXPERIENCE

VOL. 4 1977

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INTRODUCTION

JAMES R. PARKER

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-LA CROSSE

LA CROSSE, WISCONSIN

The depth and breadth of Afro-American folklore is often difficult to grasp, the varieties of its experience frequently difficult to probe easily. From folk music to folk tales and literature, the culture of black America has a heritage that grows in value and importance commensurate with the pride of the people. The selections which follow merely nod a recognition to the tradition in the hope of stimulating the reader to further study.

Etta Moten Barnett, a vocalist and performer of international renown, provides an extensive discussion of the sources and varieties of black folk music in her study, "Afro-American Folklore and Music." From the African roots of worksongs, through the American era of black slavery and spirituals, to the blues and jazz, Etta Moten Barnett provides an enlightening analysis of the emergence of folklore through the music of the people. Drawing on the wellsprings of her experience, she culminates her study with the folk opera, "Porgy and Bess," in an intriguing first-hand view of its meaning.

Dispelling stereotypes and bias against black folk music is the concern of Frank Suggs, Jr., in his "Use of Black Folklore and Folk Music in the Elementary Schools." Suggs believes it imperative that elementary school children understand black music and that understanding promotes appreciation of culture. To Suggs, folk music is an effective tool to help break down racial barriers. His experiences in the Illinois school system were preeminently successful and reinforced his belief in the efficacy of his approach.

Uncle Remus folk tales provide the subject for Marcella Howell's "Will the Authentic Hare Please Stand Up." Ms. Howell analyzes the subtleties of Joel Chandler Harris' characterizations of blacks as "childlike" creatures through the Brer Rabbit tales. She contends that Harris used Uncle Remus to transmit his own biases. A persuasive and humorous study, she chronicles the real Brer Rabbit minus Harris' interpretation of legitimate folk tales filtered through Uncle Remus. Howell's representation of the African basis of Brer Rabbit's antics provides an important insight into Afro-American folklore. One cannot help but lament the fact that Harris' Brer Rabbit continues to gain a broader audience through Disney's "Song of the South," while the more accurate folk accounts, stripped of racial stereotypes, are confined to a few books and articles to which children have little access.

Sandra C. Alexander and William H. Wiggins turn to Ralph Ellison's classic, *Invisible Man*, identifying within it different elements of black

folklore. Sandra Alexander contends that "in creating his characters and shaping his drama, Ellison has drawn . . . from the mythic conventions of the scapegoat ritual to enrich his narrative. . . ." After identifying the three classes of scapegoat archetypes, Ms. Alexander traces them to their African origins and links those to Ellison's characterizations, extracting from the novel to sustain the ritualistic pattern she has identified; be it in her analysis of the protagonist, Jim Trueblood, or Tod Clifton, her analysis is fascinating.

William Wiggins is interested in Ellison's successful blending of a variety of types of folklore, especially the oral tradition, into his *Invisible Man*, contending that the novel's folklore "represents the Afro-American's attempt to humanize the world." Wiggins studies the oral forms of the folk tales, sermons, toasts, and dozens illuminating the heritage of this verbal artistry which Ellison employs so successfully. The use of this folkloric imagery is an affirmation of black humanity and cultural tradition, the resiliency of the souls of black folk.

The final selection deals with Charles Chesnutt's *Conjure Woman* and the development of folk tales. Uncle Julius creates images in his tales that humanize the black and his culture for his auditor, although in this case, as Jill Weyant observes in "Charles Chesnutt's *The Conjure Woman*," the lesson of the value of black culture is lost upon John. Only Annie seems to comprehend the meaning of Julius' tales. Ms. Weyant believes that Chesnutt has intentionally characterized John as the archetypical authoritarian, but absent and generally powerless father figure so often portrayed in contemporary American television. Only Julius understands that Annie's psychosomatic illness indicates a loneliness John is too insensitive to recognize. Julius fills the void with tales that create a special bond between he and Annie, which Annie responds to by recognizing the special import of Julius' tales. Perhaps, as Ms. Weyant suggests, Chesnutt's Uncle Julius understood the frequently one-dimensional figure of the white male, particularly his insensitivity to the subordination of racial and sexual minorities.

AFRO-AMERICAN FOLKLORE AND MUSIC

ETTA MOTEN BARNETT

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

So acquainted am I with the term "folklore" and the specific folklore of a number of countries and regions of the world that it is difficult to provide a definition of the term. As I considered definitions, numerous little melodious ditties went through my head, and I hummed them around the house. Some of these little ditties had authors which could be recognized, and some had no authors--mere "hand-me-downs." I said to myself: "Ah, I have it! Those without authors, yet catch the spirit of a people or a region or a nation, and vibrant with the passions, yearnings, and will of a people--and live on and on of their own accord--that is the definition I need for folklore."

The term "folk" is a powerful word in all languages because it means *people*, and when we attach the term "lore" to it, we are speaking precisely of something created and used by the common people.[1] The "common people" ring throughout any word which has "folk" in it.

I concluded further that the chronology of our present era affords me a little more by the way of definition. We have entered the Bicentennial celebration denoting the 200th birthday of this nation. There is hardly a day which passes when radio and television do not have some heroic incident of our 200-year history. Some of these incidents are rooted in history, and historians have traced their accuracy in terms of the original settings and happenings. With some of the tales and legends of our history, no one has been able to attach specific authors. It occurred that someone told it first, some others expanded upon it, and perhaps each generation expanded upon the original presentation, and it became a cherished folk tale.[2]

I am always intrigued by Parson Weems who wrote one of the earliest biographies of George Washington and held that George Washington never told a lie: "Yes. Father, with my hatchet, I cut down the cherry tree." I am sure that such a lone incident was not, and is not now, sufficient evidence to warrant the generalization: "He never told a lie!"[3] But it is wonderful

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[1]Bruno Nettl, *Folk and Traditional Music of the Western Continents* (Prentice Hall, N.J.: Prentice Hall History of Music Series, 1965), pp. 3-5.

[2]Homer C. Hockett, *Introduction to Research in American History* (N.Y.: MacMillan, 1931), p. 95.

[3]*Ibid.*, p. 96.

folklore, told down through two centuries, when we are teaching Sunday School or in the early days of schooling when we want to deepen the appreciation for the first President of the United States. It is good folklore.

Every high school student knows what "folklore" is and can identify examples. The definition which I set forth at this time holds that folklore encompasses the traditions, beliefs, legends, sayings, mores, and customs in the milieu of a people. These beliefs, legends, and sayings, though difficult to trace to the first person(s) who told them, have come down through the ages to us, ofttimes embellished and magnified upon a larger canvas of storytelling. I do not wish to give the impression that folk tales, folkways, etc., are not serious enough to engage the attention of humanistic scholars. For there has emerged a school of researchers who are attempting the systematic and scientific study of folklore.[4] There are scholars assigned to this program today who are dedicating their careers to the study of folklore.[5] These studies are rooted in folkways, folk stories, and folk tales and come under the banner of "folklore."

Prior to 1846, these beliefs, traditions, hand-me-down tales, etc., were termed "popular antiquities," but W. I. Thomas gave to them the more appropriate term, "folklore."[6] It was left to the American sociologist, William Graham Sumner, to give us the term "folkway" in 1907. He defined "folkway" as any way of feeling or behaving common to members of the same social group.[7]

While folklore is reflected in such artistic media as poetry and verse, ballads, novels, dramas, and in all forms of the spoken word, it is also reflected in the artistic medium of music, whether in instrumental music and/or the written word transposed into the singing word.[8]

To sweep through African folklore in music, which would cover centuries of African traditions as reflected in that music south of the Sahara, the major black folk geographical areas, and put them in historical settings would take a full university semester. Equally, to sweep through 350 years of the black folklore on this American soil and describe the African musical heritage, and then trace the transplantation to a new geographical and cultural environment with its modifying influences, and to identify every item of original folklore would be too lengthy. Hence, I shall telescope my analysis of Afro-American folklore and music.

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[4]George Herzog, "Song"; Gertrude P. Karath, "Dance"; and Seeger, "Oral Tradition"; in Maria Leach, ed., Funk and Wagnall's *Standard Dictionary of Folklore, Mythology, and Legend* (1949-1950). "Folk Music," *Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 5th ed. (N.Y.: St. Martin's Press, 1954).

[5]Dr. Blyden Jackson, Associate Graduate Dean, The University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, N.C.

[6]W. J. Thomas, as cited in *Webster's International Dictionary* Unabridged, 2nd ed. (1951).

[7]William Graham Sumner, *Folkways* (Boston: Ginn and Co., 1906).

[8]Etta Moten Barnett, Address at North Carolina Central University, Durham (unpublished manuscript), February 15, 1975.

No American authority in music on West Africa has been able to give the full historical development of West African music in those early days prior to the slaves' importation to America. The simple reason is that the written records have been done in a spasmodic fashion, and most of what we know has been oral traditions. So eminent a scholar as Eileen Southern holds: "Two major sources of historical information are before us: the oral traditions of the land, and the books written by European travelers and traders."[9] There was, however, a primacy of music in the lives of Africans. African kings and rulers attached dancers, singers, and music makers to their courts. All public occasions were then, and still are, interspersed with appropriate ceremonial dancing by the common folk. Those who attend celebrations in Africa today observe the pomp and splendor which western protocol requires, but these events are never concluded until the native dancers and singers are allowed to enshrine the occasion in song and dance.[10] This was a tradition, a part of their folklore--long before they ever came to these shores.

Every African village had its singers, dancers, and music makers. Ceremonial singing was associated with birth, initiation, marriage, healing, going to war, and death. They sang of the historical events of their people and their kings, and in most "fulsome adulation." A special kind of music was used in victory celebrations after war or after a successful hunt. When African kings visited other kings, the musical part of the celebration was glorious. There were parades wherein drummers tossed their drums into the air and caught them--never losing step or beat. It is most interesting to note even in this century, throughout the world, that when kings and heads of state visit each other, there is a military review with spirited music; or note college and university bands with the majorettes and their batons swinging and swirling--all for a celebrated occasion. This is not to contend that West Africa gave to the world this type of ritual, because music is the universal language of all people and of all times; rather, the point is that the civilizations of West Africa had as high a regard for singing, dancing, and making music on celebrated occasions as the Greeks in their verse-speaking choruses accompanied by the music of the lyre,[11] or the Romans--less musically inclined--in their trumpets and flourishes, to denote the heroic events of their warriors and occasions of state.[12]

The major instrument of the Africans was the drum. Every writer and every trader recorded that there were always numerous drums of various sizes and shapes. Some were made from hollow logs with dried sheepskin over the

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[9]Eileen Southern, *The Music of Black Americans: A History* (W. W. Norton & Co., Inc., 1971), p. 4.

[10]Observations of Etta Moten Barnett in the U.S. Official Delegation to the Independence Celebrations of Ghana, Nigeria, Zambia, the Ivory Coast, Uganda, the Cameroons, 1960.

[11]H. L. W. Laistner, *Ancient History* (Boston: D. C. Heath Co., 1929), pp. 292-3, 312-20.

[12]*Ibid.*, pp. 547-65.

opening, while others were made from a gourd or calabash by cutting it in half and drawing a skin tightly over the opening. Drums ranged from as small as twelve inches to as large as seven feet in diameter. Two or more drums were played together, each producing different rhythmic effects and tones. Additionally, they had instruments resembling pianos, flutes, and lutes. They performed their music in poetic forms; and often their songs accompanied their daily work, always with a refrain, while one person took the lead.[13] This kind of work song was reflected in the slave period on American soil. The West Africans were engaged in antiphonal singing hundreds of years before they came to this land. I refer here to that form of music known as "the call and the response."[14] The leader used it to call the villagers together and to locate each other. Here follows an example of antiphonal singing:

Leader: "Swing low, sweet chariot"
Response: "Coming for the carry me home," etc.
Leader: "I looked over Jordan and what did I see"
Response: "Coming for to carry me home,"
Leader: "A band of angels coming after me"
Response: "Coming for to carry me home," etc., etc.

Books relating to the characteristics of early slave music and its folklore during the colonial period, 1607-1775, or the era of early nationhood, 1776-1860, are non-existent. One is forced to rely upon early Afro-American music as seen through the eyes of American travelers in the South. James Hungerford published two slave songs in 1832. Here and there were other isolated instances in recorded literature on music.[15] It was not until 1867 that the first song collection was published in book form.[16]

Authorities in the field, however, agree that by the time of the Civil War, black folk in this country had developed their own characteristic music style. The fact that they had a characteristic style was noted by European observers who were accustomed to European music styles. These traveling observers jotted down the words of songs, observed how the songs were sung, described in detail the body movements of dancers and workers, and commented

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[13] Southern, *Music of Black Americans*, p. 10.

[14] Etta Moten Barnett, Lectures at Florida A and M University, Tallahassee, and Dillard University, New Orleans, La., as Artist-in-Residence, 1968-1973.

[15] There were often printed examples of slave songs which appeared in periodicals. In 1832, two songs were written down by James Hungerford and published in his book, *The Old Plantation*. There were not more than 144 slave songs recorded by 1867. In 1872 there was a collection of 128 slave songs in *Jubilee Songs as Sung by the Fisk Jubilee Singers*. In 1874 a similar publication contained 50 songs: *Hampton and Its Students . . . with Fifty Cabin and Plantation Songs Arranged by Thomas P. Fenner*. Then William E. Barton came along in 1898 with his collection, *Old Plantation Hymns* (54 songs). All in all, the slave song repertory recorded in musical form with notation was no fewer than 382 songs.

[16] Colonel Thomas W. Higginson (with Garrison), *Slave Songs of the United States* (1867). See Footnote 15.

upon the construction and techniques of the instruments. Some observers began to record what they heard in European notations, commonly making mistakes. These observers had no phonographs nor recording instruments. They rarely had the privilege of hearing the songs a second time. Had they heard the same song several times, they would have noted that in folk songs relating to religious work or dance, that folk music is sung many ways. Frequently folk songs are sung differently within the same locality, and often the same thing occurs in different geographical regions.

It is possible, however, to examine and critically analyze the music prior to these various short publications on the basis of the text, melody, and rhythm of the songs in print after the Civil War. All writers on Afro-American music give credit to the Fisk Jubilee Singers and the Hampton Institute Singers for the early codifying and preserving of this music immediately after the Civil War.[17]

We return to the early slave songs and examine how they carried the traditions, beliefs, legends, and folk tales--music in history.

Slaves often composed their own folk music for the few ceremonies they were permitted to engage in: death, and some few other activities. They always used music and words of their own which befitted the occasion. Some writers portray only their religious songs, but Eileen Southern contends that the song types were rarely of a religious nature in those early days, although the religious nature was later to implant itself. Other writers and narrators saw slave songs as forms of minstrelsy, songs sung by stevedores at work, people in the cotton fields--normally with one man taking the lead line and other workers striking in with the refrain.

It is rarely possible to identify the author of a folk song and to pinpoint its original form. Folk songs are created by non-professional musicians, are performed by common people, and are passed along from one generation to another orally. In the process of transmission, the music is adapted to the taste of both those who sing and those who listen. The changes that take place become a part of the music as, inevitably, the music takes on a different form than it originally had. Over a span of years, the authors' names are forgotten.

There were three choices available to the slave composer who wished to create a new song. Consciously or unconsciously, the composer could improvise upon a song already in existence; secondly, he could combine materials from several old songs to make the new one; and finally, he might compose the song entirely of new materials. The African tradition favored the first--improvise upon the song already in existence. In fact, improvisation is so strong a factor in this tradition that changes are introduced into songs with each new performance. Above all, music in the African tradition was functional.[18]

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[17]Armstrong and Ludlow, *Hampton and Its Students* (Hampton, Va.); W. Marsh, *The Story of the Jubilee Singers* (1880); C. Lovingood, *Famous Modern Negro Musicians* (N.Y., 1921); G. D. Pike, *The Jubilee Singers and Their Campaign for 20,000 Dollars* (Boston, 1873); Theodore Seward and George White, *Jubilee Songs* (N.Y., 1884); James M. Trotter, *Music and Some Highly Musical People* (Boston, 1878).

[18]Etta Moten Barnett, Lectures and Travels.

Consequently, the melody of a song often served chiefly as a vehicle for the text and was constantly adjusted to fit, even as the singer extemporized from one verse to the next.

Slave music in the United States was squarely in the African tradition with respect to improvisations. All the evidence indicated that a large number of the slave songs represented "variations upon a theme"--that is, the songs seemed to have been altered versions of very old songs. No doubt many of these songs, the social songs in particular, were brought from Africa and passed from parents to children. Almost every contemporary bibliographical source contains references to slaves born in Africa who helped to keep the African traditions alive in their communities during the 1700's and 1800's.[19] And the continuous influx of new slaves helped to revive traditions that were in danger of dying, whether the newcomers came from Africa, the West Indies, or another state. Thus, it has been possible for researchers to find a number of direct parallels between African melodies and slave tunes, and future research may reveal many more.

The second option available to the folk song composers was that of combining materials from several old songs to make a new one. This accounted for a considerable number of spiritual texts which, unlike the social songs, utilized lines from the scriptures and Protestant hymns. To the sacred verses, the slaves added their own verses, refrains, and choruses to make up complete songs.

The third option made an entirely new song, usually a work song. The style of the work song was related to the activity performed and was designed to accompany it. In rowing songs, like rowing songs the world over, the turn of the oar matched a music sound, always flowing with rhythm. Rowing songs had a plaintive and melancholy tune. The boatman kept time with the stroke of every oar:

> We are going down to Georgia boys, Aye, Aye
> To see the Pretty Girls, boys, Aye, Aye
> We'll give them a pint of brandy boys, Aye, Aye
> And a hardy kiss besides, boys, Aye, Aye.[20]

If it were a roustabout song requiring more vigor, then the folk tale had to be sung that way:

> Molly was a good gal and a bad gal, too
> Oh, Molly, row gal;
> Molly was a good gal and a bad gal too,
> Oh, Molly, row gal.
>
> I'll row this boat and I'll row no more
> Row, Molly, row gal

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[19] Herbert Aptheker, *The Negro in the American Revolution* (N.Y., 1940); John Hope Franklin, *From Slavery to Freedom* (N.Y., 1967); Lorenzo Greene, *The Negro in Colonial New England* (N.Y., 1942).

[20] Southern, *Music of Black Americans*, p. 177.

I'll row this boat and I'll row no more
Row, Molly, Row, gal.[21]

There were corn songs which were sung specifically at corn-shucking frolics. No matter what the nature of the corn song was, singers added on verses which touched on their own experiences, their beliefs, their traditions and legends. For example, in one instance they took some parts of the nursery rhyme and added their own special touch for corn shucking:

Massa in the great house counting out his money
Oh, shuck that corn and throw it in the barn
Missis in the parlor eating bread and honey
Oh, shuck that corn and throw it in the barn,[22] etc.

William Wells Brown, the black writer of the 1800's,[23] left to us other versions of the corn song:

All them pretty gals will be there
Shuck that corn before you eat
They will fix it for us rare
Shuck that corn before you eat
I know that supper will be big
Shuck that corn before you eat
I think I smell a fine roast pig
Shuck that corn before you eat.

Another folk music category was that of dance songs and play songs. Often, the slaves called their dance songs "fiddle songs," "jig tunes," and "devil songs." There were "patting songs" when a guitar or fiddle player was present. The meaning of a patting song was just what it implied: pat your hands and keep rhythm and time.

Who's been here since I've been gone?
Pretty little gal wid a josey on.

Never see the like since I was born,
Here comes a little gal wid a josey on.[24]

Any kind of short expression could be improvised after each two lines.

The calinda was a dance and song in which two columns of people formed and faced each other, advancing and retreating, singing and dancing at the same time. The song and dance called the *Bamboula* was a couple dance whose name referred to the African bamboo drum. The slave dance best known throughout the South was the *Juba*, and they did this with or without music. Patting of hands could suffice.

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[21] *Ibid.*, p. 179. [22] *Ibid.*, p. 181.

[23] William Edward Farrison, *William Wells Brown* (University of Chicago, 1969).

[24] Southern, *Music of Black Americans*, p. 182.

There were only a few of the songs generally considered story songs and ballads because they were normally heroic in content, and slaves did not live the lives of heroes and heroines. Their story songs partook of animal songs--something like the Brer Rabbit tales popularized by Joel Chandler Harris.

Yet another category is that of satirical songs. Africans have always manifested satire in their songs, but they rather chose to use the term, "poke fun at." For example, *Mr. Banjo*:

> Look at the puffed up Mr. Banjo over there,
> See how he puts on airs
> Hat perched on the side of his head, Mr. Banjo
> Fancy cane in his hand, Mr. Banjo
> New boots that go squeak, squeak, Mr. Banjo.[25]

Field and street cries were a form of folk song often overlooked. These were musical, but termed "cornfield hollers." A slave "call cry" could mean any number of things: a call for water ("Water Boy"), food, or help, a call to let others know where he was working, a call or cry of loneliness, sorrow, or happiness.

One can perceive a great deal about the folk elements in Negro spirituals, a truly broad current of folk music, by the study of the American Episcopal Church *Hymnal*.[26] Dr. Isaac Watts, who had done a collection of Protestant hymns, was often an inspiration for the revised songs of slaves. Black preachers played a role in these changes. Richard Allen, in his *Hymnal* of 1801, showed clearly which of Watt's songs had become black folk favorites. Often Negro spirituals were derived from the Watts collection, often formed on their own. For instance, Dr. Watts wrote "When I can Read My Title Clear." It becomes Hymn 26 in Richard Allen's collection just as Watts wrote it.

> When I can read my title clear
> to Mansions in the sky.
> I bid farewell to ev'ry fear
> And wipe my weeping eyes.
> Should earth again, my soul engage
> And hellish darts be hurl'd
> Then I can smile at Satan's rage

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[25] *Ibid.*, p. 185.

[26] *Allen's Hymnals* can be examined at the American Antiquarian Society, Worcester, Mass. R. Nathaniel Dett, *Folk Songs of the Negro as Sung at Hampton Institute* (Hampton, Va., 1927); W. E. B. Dubois, "Of Sorrow Songs," *The Souls of the Black Folk* (Chicago, 1903); Mile Mark Fisher, *Negro and Slave Songs in the United States* (Ithica, 1953); Howard Gregg, *Richard Allen and Present Day Social Problems* (located Wilberforce University, Ohio, n.d.); Zelma George, *A Bibliographical Index to Negro Music* (Spingarn-Moorland Collection, Howard University, Washington, D.C.); James Weldon Johnson and James Rosamond Johnson, *The Book of American Negro Spirituals* (N.Y., 1925, 1926); Dorothy Scarborough, *On the Trail of Negro Folk Songs* (Boston, 1925); Charles W. Wesley, *Richard Allen, Apostle of Freedom* (Washington, D.C.: Associated Publishers, 1935); John Wesley Work, *American Negro Songs and Spirituals* (Nashville, Tenn., 1940).

And face a frowning world.
Let care like wild deluge come,
And storms of sorrow fall,
May I but safely reach my home,
My God, my heav'n, my all.
There shall I bathe my weary soul,
In seas of heav'nly rest
And not a wave of trouble roll--
Across my peaceful breast.

This hymn perhaps, not necessarily, became the source of several Negro spirituals which bear the basic concepts. For example:

In bright mansions above
In bright mansions above
Lord, I want to see my Savior
In bright mansions above, . . .

In this spiritual, the folk composer has taken the basic concept of the Watts hymn, which was written for the white Protestant, and has restated it in the language of his people. In Hymn Number 10 in Richard Allen's *Hymnal:*

Behold the awful trumpet sounds
The sleeping dead to raise,
And calls the nations underground:
O how the saints will praise.

Behold the Saviour how he comes
Descending from his throne
To burst asunder all our tombs
And lead his children home.

But who can fear that dreadful day,
To see the world in flame:
The burning mountains melt away,
While rocks run down in streams.

The falling stars their orbits leave,
The sun in darkness hide;
The elements asunder cleave,
The moon turn'd into blood.

Behold the universal world
In consternation stand,
The wicked into Hell are turn'd
The saints at God's right hand.

O Then the music will begin
Their Savior God to praise,
They all are freed from every sin
And this they'll spend their days!

Numerous spirituals have been derived from this hymn. The best known no doubt is found in *The Fisk Jubilee and Hampton Singers Collections:*

My Lord, what a morning,
My Lord, what a morning
My Lord, what a morning
When the stars begin to fall.
You will hear the trumpet sound,
To wake the nations underground
Looking to my God's right hand,
When the stars begin to fall.

In the above spiritual, the vivid imagination of the folk composer seizes upon the significance of the awesome events that will take place on "Judgment," according to the hymn, and gives first his personal reaction: "My Lord, what a morning." Then he proceeds to enumerate the events, using for the most part the same phrases as in the hymn. The result is, however, an entirely new song with new music and a new form.

A further elaboration has come to us with "In that Great Getting-Up Morning" (traditional). After a twenty-line introduction consisting of original material, the slave composer takes the first stanza of the hymn and expands it into a little story. He gives the trumpet to Gabriel, who holds a lengthy conversation with the Lord about how he is to blow. After each line of text, the refrain comes:

In that Great Getting-Up Morning, Fare you well, Fare you well,
In that Great Getting-Up Morning, Fare you well.

The conversation between Gabriel and the Lord was translated to the level of slaves speaking to each other: The Lord tells Gabriel, "Go look behind the alter, take down the silver trumpet." Gabriel wants to blow it soft and easy and not disturb anyone too much. The Lord says, "Blow it as loud as peals of thunder and wake the living nations." The Lord says, "Put one foot on dry land and one on the sea. You will see coffins bursting, dry bones come a-crying, hell shall be uncapped and dragons will be loosened. Where you running poor sinner. You will see the moon a-bleeding, the stars a-falling, elements a-melting, hear the rumbling of the thunder, earth shall reel and totter, then you will see the Christians rising, the righteous marching home to heaven, and there they will live with God forever, on the right hand side of my Savior." Thus, one sees a Negro spiritual of saga proportions fashioned from the materials of a single hymn. The original hymn did not satisfy the slaves so they improvised upon it to fit their needs. These examples could be carried farther and particularly from this Watts' original hymn. The story of Gabriel as folklore is recreated in the musical drama of 1930, *The Green Pastures*, featuring Richard B. Harrison as "De Lawd."

Spirituals have become classics in the repertory of American music and songs and also some phases of gospel singing.[27]

In singing their beliefs, traditions, and religious experiences of their folklore, Afro-Americans had vivid imagination, often using poetic language and themes, especially in their spirituals. Examples of lines of vivid poetic

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[27]The author is the daughter of a Presiding Elder in the AME church and recalls her father, Dr. Fremont Moten, of the current century, composing church songs.

themes in spirituals include: "Brother sitting on the tree of life," "I cast my sins in the middle of the sea," "My sins so heavy, I can't get along," "Rock O'my soul in the Bosom of Abraham," "Death's going to lay his cold icy hands on me," "Roll, Jordan roll," and "The mournful thunder calling home God's children."

The use or necessity of rhyme was not regarded by the slave singer, because he could improvise at will, as long as he was adding real life experiences or touches of his imagination. His biblical heroes, as well as references, if we judge from the number of times the names were repeated, were Jacob, Satan, Daniel, Gabriel, Moses, and Joshua.

A study of melody and scales in Negro folk songs shows some common factors. For example, the opening verses of Negro folk songs tended to be syllabic, that is, there was one note for each syllable. The verses that followed were another matter. Once a pattern had been set, any number of syllables could be sung on a single pitch. Slaves were never worried about the words because they would fit them to the tune.

Most of their melodies used the tones of either the major scale or the pentatonic scale. These scales produced bright, cheerful melodies. Some slave songs demonstrated varying types of melodic contours and lines. Some melodies rose gently in an undulating line to high pitches, then fell slowly to the final tones, thus taking on the contour of symmetrical curves. Rhythm is the most striking feature of slave songs.

The music was never separated from some form of body movement--if not dancing or working, then hand clapping, foot tapping, or swaying of the body. What they had really done was contrived a rudimentary kind of opera, combining the poetry of motion and music and of language. All of their songs could be performed as well as sung and played. Often the performance shaped the song and thus determined its rhythm, melody, texture, tempo, text, and finally its effects upon the listeners. This was largely because of the improvisation in the African tradition. Adding to their improvisations of sentences were mere phrases which punctured the lines, such phrases as "Yes, Lord," "O Lord," "I Say Now." The nature of the interjection depended upon the occasion.

This improvisation is brought home more clearly when we examine Afro-American folklore and the Blues. Whether one knows it or not, there is a thin line of demarcation between the spirituals, work songs, and the Blues. They all emanate from life's experiences.

It is overwhelmingly clear that the Afro-American artist must know Afro-American music, but also must know the music and folklore of other peoples in other regions and countries. As concertizer, Afro-American music had its place, but the concertizer has to sing German, Italian, French, Spanish, etc., if he or she is to be regarded as a universal artist. As a graduate of the University of Kansas Fine Arts School with a major in voice, and having heavily concertized on four continents (the United States, Europe, Africa, and South America), permit me to inject a personal comment on black folklore in music in my repertory. I was among the earliest concert artists to include a section on Negro spirituals in my formal concerts.

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[28]The Etta Moten Memorabilia located at the headquarters of the Associated Negro Press, Chicago, Ill.

Among the more important influences in black music folklore are the black preservers of that music. It would serve no academic purpose for me to list individually the black and white concert artists, singers and instrumentalists who have popularized Afro-American folklore in music. The list would be too long and would include 90 percent of American concert singers. It would be of academic interest, however, to relate something of the famous black choral groups which have been, and are, the preservers of this folklore in music. The most important of these are the Fisk University Jubilee Singers and the Hampton Institute Singers.

Fisk University, founded in 1866, placed great emphasis upon liberal arts but utilized the singing talents of its students. By 1871, a white music teacher there decided to organize a chorus and take it on tours for the purpose of seeking financial contributions for the University. They traveled throughout the major cities in the United States and sang before crown heads of Europe. Here was a university group, traveling and singing, telling no jokes, doing no "coon" dances, popularizing no catch tunes, but placing great emphasis upon Negro spirituals and folk songs.[29] For thirty years, from 1938 to 1968, John W. Work, Sr. and Jr., guided the destiny of the Fisk Singers.

General Armstrong, of Civil War fame, established Hampton Institute in Virginia. Booker T. Washington graduated there. In 1872-73, the Hampton Institute Singers were organized and, following the pattern of the Fisk Jubilee Singers, traveled at home and abroad. A great name in music is forever associated with these singers--R. Nathaniel Dett. His specialty was setting the Negro spirituals to music.[30]

Additionally, professional choral groups, which were not located on college or university campuses, have been influential in preserving black music. They were hired singers from all walks of life, with good voices. They may not have known how to read music, but that task was undertaken by the highly professional and distinguished director. Choral groups after World War I became famous, especially during the Harlem Renaissance.

The Hall Johnson Choir is one example of such a group. Hall Johnson (1888-1970) possessed strong ideas about how Negro folk songs should be sung. He was a highly trained musician, choosing orchestral music first, later choral music. He organized the Hall Johnson Choir in 1925 and soon was in demand for concerts by theatre and radio. The Choir made records for RCA Victor in 1928. In 1930, Johnson was appointed choral director for the production of *The Green Pastures*. This great musical drama was declared to be one of the loftiest achievements of the American theatre. This musical drama displayed the black man's view of "The Book of Genesis" from the Bible.[31] A black man, Richard B. Harrison, played "De Lawd." Warner Brothers filmed the musical drama in 1936.

A second example of a professional chorus is the Eva Jessye Choir. Even as a child, Eva Jessye was interested in ensemble singing. After college in 1916, she moved from Coffeyville, Kansas, took various teaching jobs, and

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[29]Marsh, *Story of the Jubilee Singers*, and Work, *American Negro Songs*.

[30]Dett, *Folk Songs of the Negro*.

[31]Edith Isaacs, *The Negro in the American Theatre* (New York City, 1969).

finally arrived in New York City in 1922. By 1926, she had organized the Eva Jessye Choir. She was called to Hollywood to train a choir to sing in King Vidor's film, *Hallelujah*, in 1929. In 1935, Gershwin selected her to serve as choral director for *Porgy and Bess* and its many subsequent revivals.[32] The repertory staples of her choir were numbers from the folklore music of *Porgy and Bess* and other folklore music written by black composers.

Finally, the De Paur Infantry Chorus provides a third instance. World War II found many singing groups in the armed services. Established concert artists and popular singers, as well as musical groups, were assembled to tour the United States and overseas, providing entertainment for all units. A famous all-black music group, the De Paur Infantry Chorus, was created by Leonard De Paur when he was assigned to organize a glee club in the 372nd Infantry Regiment. They sang Negro folk songs, spirituals, as well as works of European and American composers.[33]

Of particular interest as a study of the variety and changes in Afro-American folklore and music is the course it has taken in the twentieth century. There were virtually three stages of black music during the century. Each stage glides into the other, with the newer one carrying identifiable concepts and techniques of the former. The three stages were rag music, the blues, and jazz.

Rag music was associated primarily with the piano. The early rag music players were anonymous drifters in the Mississippi River country and later on the eastern seaboard. They played in cheap eating places, honky-tonk spots, saloons, riverside dives, and for small salaries or often only tips. The lone player substituted for a full orchestra. With his left hand, he maintained the steady regular beat of the dance orchestra bass; with his right hand he carried a sharply syncopated melody--altering, improvising, and embellishing as he played. Where, in the past, the percussive element was provided by foot stomping or slapping of hands, now the left hand working with the bass keys on the piano did it. Along with rag music was its partner in dance known as the "Cake Walk." Names associated with rag music are too numerous to list. Some of the more important ones were Scott Joplin, Thomas Million Turpin, James Sylvester Scott, Scott Hayden, Joc Jordan, Eubie Blake, Noble Sisle, and Ferdinand "Jelly Roll" Morton. Ragtime soon went over into the white music world and became more popular through Irving Berlin's *Alexander's Ragtime Band*.[34]

The man who popularized "The Blues" was William C. Handy. One must know that terrific female singers, such as Mamie Smith, Bessie Smith, Ma Rainey, Ethel Waters, and others, had left their marks earlier. Handy, however, recognized the blues as a weird and earthy music carrying the sorrow, lost

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[32]The author began her professional singing career as chief soloist with the Eva Jessye Choir, New York City, 1931.

[33]Many works treat the De Paur Infantry Chorus, but for something of the flavor ot its success, see the Negro newspapers, 1945-1950.

[34]Rudi Blesh and Harriette Janis, *They All Played Ragtime* (New York City, 1966); and Willie Smith and George Hoefer, *Music on My Mind* (New York City, 1964).

loves, and work weariness of black folk. The blues constituted an aural music, intended to take on its shape and style during performances. In reality, the blues reflected the very personal response of the singer or inventor to a specific situation. By singing of his or her own misery, the blues singer achieves a kind of catharsis, and life becomes meaningful again.

Normally the blues has a three-line stanza. The first two lines are repetitions, and the third line is a contrasting statement. I reduce it to this simple formula: 1) the first line states the case, 2) the second line restates the case, and 3) the third line tells the result of the case. For example, a man loses his sweetheart: 1) "Woke up this morning feeling sad and blue," 2) "Woke up this morning feeling sad and blue," 3) "Ain't got nobody to tell my troubles to." Many of you may think of a different third line, and it would not matter so long as the third line conformed to your feeling and reaction and rhymed. Often at the end of the first and second lines, hearers inserted "Oh Lawdy," "Yes man," "Oh play it," etc. The key factor is that of improvisation, a strong carry-over from Afro-American folklore tradition. These newly composed variations become folk songs of a kind.[35]

The fusion of blues and ragtime with brass bands and syncopated dance resulted in music termed "Jazz." Jazz developed its own characteristics. It is associated in one way or another with folk mores of black people in the United States. Jazz is vocally oriented music. The players of the big brass band era replaced the human voice with their instruments. These bands sought to re-create the singing style and blue notes by using scooping, sliding, whining, growling, and falsetto effects. It is the personality of the player which gives jazz its individualism as he improvises. Some of the well-known jazz players were King Oliver, Fletcher Henderson, Andy Kirk, Lucky Millinder, Count Basie, Les Hite, "Jelly Roll" Morton, Chick Webb, Erskine Hawkins, Don Redman, Duke Ellington, Earl "Fatha" Hines, Louis Armstrong, Jimmie Lunceford, Cab Calloway, Louis Russell, and Bennie Moten. The outstanding singers of the jazz era were Ella Fitzgerald, Billy Eckstine, Billy Holliday, Adelaide Hall, Maxine Sullivan, and Ivy Anderson.[36]

Perhaps the pinnacle of an art form is the concept of opera. In *Porgy and Bess* America has its best black folk opera. Ann Brown of Baltimore was the original "Bess" in 1935 when the opera was launched. In 1942, when *Porgy and Bess* was revived, the author was selected as "Bess." For this opera, there was a Broadway and traveling run of three years.

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[35]William C. Handy, "The Heart of the Blues" (1940), located in Eileen Southern, ed., *Readings in Black American Music* (New York City, 1971). Also, Le Roi Jones, *Blues People: The Negro Experience in White America and the Music that Developed from It* (New York City, 1963); Alan Lomax, *Mister Jelly Roll* (New York City, 1950); Paul Oliver, *The Story of the Blues* (New York City, 1969).

[36]Richard Bardolph, *The Negro Vanguard* (New York City, 1959); Eddie Condon and Richard Gehman, *Treasury of Jazz* (New York City, 1956); Leonard Feather, *The New Edition of the Encyclopedia of Jazz* (New York City, 1960); Gene Fernett, *A Thousand Golden Horns* (Midland, Michigan, 1966); Richard Hadlock, *Jazz Masters of the Twenties* (New York City, 1965); Langston Hughes, *Famous Negro Music Makers* (New York City, 1956); George T. Simon, *The Big Bands* (New York City, 1967); Barry Ulanov, *A History of Jazz in America* (New York City, 1955).

Porgy and Bess was a folk opera. Everyone hears of opera, but here was a folk opera. What was it, and why a folk opera? The scene was laid in Charleston, South Carolina, along a street known as Catfish Row. Porgy is the town's cripple, having lost both lower legs, but well known by all races in the town.

In Charleston, black men went to sea to earn their living by fishing commercially. Often, storms and other havocs of nature never permitted the total number to return from the sea. There were tense and nervous times on Catfish Row when the time came for the fishermen to return. The opening number in *Porgy and Bess* is "Summer Time, When the Living Is Easy," and is sung by a mother holding her baby while awaiting the return of her husband. There are other characters such as Crown, the dope pusher; Sportin Life, associated with good times; Bess, the local belle and considered as Crown's woman. Crown is accused of murder after a fight and flees to a swamp island off the coast of Charleston. Everyone frowns on Bess, regarded as a "loose woman." When she tries to find comfort while Crown is away, she is ignored. She knocks on door after door and is turned away. Finally, she knocks on Porgy's door. He lets her in. Now, she is declared as Porgy's woman.

Crown sneaks back into town and carries Bess to the swamp island, from which she is later rescued. She has contracted a terrible fever, yet Porgy takes her back and watches over her vigilantly. When Crown is killed, the evidence of guilt points to Porgy. Porgy is carried off to jail. While in jail, he visualizes returning to Catfish Row, bringing presents to everyone, and especially a bright red dress for Bess. Finally he returns and seeks her, but Bess has fled with Sportin Life to New York City. This is a hard blow for Porgy to accept. The people on Catfish Row do not even know where New York City is. Porgy asks: "Where New York?" The answer comes: "Way up past the customs house." The customs house is at a point in Charleston on the Ashley River. In the end, Porgy is seen walking, on limbs without lower legs, on his way to New York.[37]

What makes *Porgy and Bess* an outstanding folk opera is that it captures the milieu of Catfish Row as revealed in the lives of the plain people. Fishing is a way of life there, and sorrow and death are often the result of the fishing life. The customs house, a mile or two away, is the farthest point beyond Catfish Row which these people know. The opera describes small elements of the people's lives, such as the saucer burial--a local tradition of collecting money in a saucer to defray the cost of burying these poor people. The play shows the vendors and their cries as they hawk their wares: "the Strawberry woman" or "the Crawfish man." The folk element is clear when the opera explains attitudes with near legendary power. For example, Bess, although very ill, cannot be taken to a hospital for they believed all people who are taken to a hospital die there. Picnics are preceded by parades, and folk songs are sung. "Gone, Gone, Gone" is performed as a mourning song and is a folkway. Sportin Life sings several numbers, but the hit song was "It Ain't Necessarily So." It deals with Bible tales, such as Jonah and the whale, and is one composed just as the Negro spirituals were in days of yore, linking up any selections one chooses. Porgy's refusal to look at and identify the man he killed is based on a folk superstition. If one who kills and looks on the dead person, the dead man's body will bleed. Even the rousing finale as

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[37] Dubose Heyward and Dorothy, *Porgy* (drama), put into folk opera as *Porgy and Bess* by George Gershwin, 1935.

Porgy leaves for New York City as a Negro spiritual: "Oh Lawd, I'm on My Way."

All of the items listed here, and more, are intertwined in *Porgy and Bess*. These legends, traditions, beliefs, customs, and folkways comprise the folklore of the people of the area. And the opera *Porgy and Bess* is but the vehicle through which this folklore is portrayed, as well as preserved.

Afro-American musical folklore has a variegated and rich history, a history that clarifies the attitudes of generations of black Americans, that gives us a myriad of insights into the lives of the poor and common black folk. So much is lost to us, so much of the spirit and temper of the people that can only be suggested in their music. As an art form, as an historical perspective, it deserves much more and careful study and, above all, appreciation.

THE USE OF BLACK FOLKLORE AND FOLK MUSIC IN THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

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Students throughout America's public school system, black and white, must begin to appreciate the culture of black Americans. A large part of that culture is found in black folklore. One way of developing that essential called appreciation is by using black folk music and folklore simultaneously. Such an approach was adopted some years ago and found to be surprisingly effective. Perhaps its success was largely due to the fact that music is an emotional and intellectual experience which, by its very character, demands a child's interest and active involvement when correctly performed. This paper describes some activities and conclusions about the importance of black folk music to elementary school children.

The group involved here is the Black Art Jazz Performers of Illinois State University in Normal, Illinois. The Jazz Performers are an all-black music ensemble composed of a drummer, an electric bass, a percussionist, a flute player, a saxophonist, a pianist, and five singer-actor-dancers. By singing and performing in the schools, the group has learned a great deal about how to approach the children and improve their appreciation of black culture.

The primary emphasis and element in the group's approach to black folklore and folk music in the elementary school is pride. We do not want the students feeling sorry for black people. We want them to view blacks as a strong people who survived slavery. The goal is for the child to identify with these strong people. Singing, dancing, and talking are presented as positive imitative characteristics.

A second crucial element of this endeavor was to stress the necessity of the performers approaching the children with an enthusiastic attitude. The group wanted to convey the feeling: "I enjoy what I am doing, like I am doing it and you can share my enjoyment if you learn to do what I am doing." With this approach, time is not consumed with talking about the attitudes of blacks and whites toward each other, nor is the mistreatment of blacks by whites during slavery discussed. The focus is upon getting the black child to freely respond to the music in the midst of his non-black friends. The unstated message to the black student is that, "We know how your parents and friends sing, dance, and talk. Well, we sing, dance, and talk the same way and we are proud of the way we communicate artistically." The group wants black and white students to identify with them in this kind of proudness.

Correct style was the third and most important element in this method of presenting folklore and black songs in the elementary school. Many of the songs, stories, and dances in black folklore can be found in other cultures. It is the way they are performed that makes them black. The style of performance is usually the part of black folklore which non-blacks and some blacks find objectionable. Numerous black songs, stories, and dances are recorded on records, in textbooks, films and filmstrips. However, they are usually not performed in a style that the black child can associate with the black people that he or she knows.

Over a period of time, the school's version of a song, as found in the music series, filmstrips, or recordings, becomes the "correct" way of performing the song. In time, the black and the white children place more value on the school version than on the original. In fact, some children will tend to dislike the non-school original. Often, this causes the black child to be ashamed of the way his own people tell tales, dance, or sing. Equally often, white children view the black people's version of the song as a second-rate or illegitimate rendition. The cumulative effect of non-black folklore imitations being judged as more valuable than the original is detrimental to black music. It is reflected in the negative attitudes displayed toward black rhythms and vocal sounds being used in the public schools by some black and white students.

Feedback from students, teachers, principals, and parents seems to indicate that black folklore and black folk music in the elementary school can affect black and white children positively as they learn to participate in the use of black rhythms (complex polyrhythms) and black vocal sounds and inflections.

The group began experimenting three and one-half years ago with twenty white middle-class three and four-year-olds at Calvary Methodist Church nursery school in Normal, Illinois. The assumption was made that, without intervention, these children would develop negative attitudes toward black rhythmic motor responses (primitive, uncivilized, unsophisticated, etc.) and black vocal patterns and inflections (out of tune, unpure sounds, harsh, unpleasant). The objective was to help the children develop motor responses in order to make musical rhythms more meaningful and to learn black language sounds in order to sing black songs in correct style.

Meetings were held with the children two days a week for approximately twenty minutes per day for twelve weeks. The procedure was to play black folksongs, live and recorded, and to let the children respond freely. The children responded to the overall sound but not to the music.

In a second early attempt to use folklore in the school, the group used lessons in rhythm with fourth and fifth graders in Irving School in Bloomington, Illinois. Irving is 20 percent black. Donny Hathaway's recording of *The Ghetto* was used as the basis for developing three rhythmic contrasting patterns. The instrumentation relied upon two conga drums, bongos, sticks, maracas, and a tambourine. The black students wanted to play all of the instruments and do all of the singing. They acted toward the white students as if this was something that blacks could do that whites could not. As various students played and sang, it became clear that the black students' rhythms were fluid and flowing, while those of the white students were sharp, precise, and marchlike.

The third classroom effort was in two sixth grade classes in Irving School. The group wanted the students to sing one blues song, play the blues progression

on the autoharp, and write some blues poetry. The white students felt that this was something for black students, and the black students did not want to do it.

The same lesson was taken to Lincoln School (40 percent black) in Peoria, Illinois, in a modified form. The group met separately with all classes from kindergarten through eighth grade for one period. Out of two hundred children, only three, all black, volunteered to improvise new words to the blues song. The classroom lessons were followed by a school assembly on the blues by the Black Art Jazz Performers. The Performers involved the students in singing, motor responses, improvisation, and playing rhythms to the blues. By the end of the assembly, black and white students wanted to sing, act out stories, play instruments, create words to songs, and improvise individually in front of the student body. This assembly was presented at Webster School, 10 percent of which is black, in Peoria, Illinois, in the afternoon. Classroom blues lessons did not precede the Webster School assembly; however, the children reacted in largely the same way in both schools.

In February of 1975, a return visit was made to Lincoln and Webster Schools for an activities oriented assembly in black folksongs with the Black Art Jazz Performers. The responses to the assembly, taken from letters written by a fourth grade class in Lincoln School, included the following:

> "I liked the way Archie acted as a slave."
> "You did look like my uncle Carnell Junction. He was as good as you."
> "I like to sing like you. Come back to Lincoln and pick me."
> "I want to thank Archie, Leslie, Ann, and Cherry for the slavery act."
> "I did enjoy the claps we did."
> "I will make faces for you again."
> "It was the nicest music I ever heard, and you were nice, and that was fun making faces. I liked the way you sang."
> "I hope I be in your band at I.S.U. [Illinois State University]."

The group's most recent experience was in four elementary schools in Aurora, Illinois. The schools were Nancy Hill (40 percent black) with three black teachers, Todd (10 to 12 percent black) with two black teachers, Snyder (2 percent black) with one black teacher, and Mclearity (3 to 5 percent black) with no black teachers. Performances were given in school assemblies, which were thirty to forty minutes in length, held in the schools' multipurpose rooms where the students sat on the floor, with the youngest in front and the oldest in the rear.

The material presented to the grade school students was "Possum Up a 'Simmon Tree," which is claimed to be the oldest recorded slave song; "John Brought the Letter," an Atlantic coast song which has the melodic shape and rhythm of calypso music; "Think I'm Working, But I Ain't, " a John and Massa tale in which Massa gets the better of John; and "All I Want Is a Little Bit of Love," a blues song made popular by B. B. King.

"Possum Up a 'Simmon Tree" was sung by the group in unison with the band accompanying. The objective was for the performers to be so enthusiastic that the children would want to sing with them. It was casually mentioned by one of the performers that this was an old slave song.

"John Brought the Letter" was preceded by a request that the boys named John raise their hands. After the students named John were identified, the student body was told that John was a slave who could read. It was emphasized that the ability to read made a person important in the old days when only a few people could read. The students were asked to participate by clapping their hands to the beat of the song, and some students clapped the Juba rhythm that was being clapped by the performers. The verse of "John," which is the familiar "one by one and two by two and three by three and four by four," was quickly learned by the students as they sang along with the performers.

"Think I'm Working, But I Ain't" was in skit form with the two characters, Massa and John, explaining their stereotype relationship. "All I Want Is a Little Bit of Love," sung in call and response style, ended the assemblies. As a whole, the children sang the responses in tune and correct rhythm. Some students were given the opportunity to come forward and sing either the call or the response alone in the microphone. Twenty or more students volunteered in each school; however, only five to seven were chosen. The volunteers unconsciously tried to imitate the blues vocal sound of the performers, and some of them succeeded.

Some of the verbal reactions to the assemblies ranged from the kindergarten students, who told their teacher that "the assembly was about love," to three white primary children at Macdonald's after the assembly who waved and sang, "All I Want Is a Little Bit of Love." The music teacher at Mclearity left us a note: "THE CHILDREN RESPONDED!!!!"; while the principal at Todd stated: "We want you back next year, and we want you to spend more time with the students."

The grade school audience reacted to the Black Art Jazz Performers as if they were celebrities: they mobbed them. The children wanted to touch the performers, talk to the performers, and get their autographs. There was no visible racial hostility between black and white students resulting from the racial origin of the I.S.U. group, the choice of material, or the style of performance. The white students seemed to enjoy the activities and reacted to the Black Art Jazz Performers as performers, not as a racial group. They wanted to be around celebrities. Black students seemed proud that the performers were black. They participated as if they wanted the Jazz Performers to know that they identified with them. This identification was especially vivid in schools in which there were very few black students.

In order for students to be affected in a positive manner by black folklore and folk music, they must become physically, intellectually, and emotionally involved in *performing* the music, the tales, and the movements. The first performances should employ only those persons who can perform the folklore and folk music in correct style, project a positive attitude toward the folklore, and be so enthusiastic that students will freely get involved in the activity.

When teaching black folklore and folksongs, black people should be projected as strong people who endured slavery. Afro-Americans *must not* be displayed as a poor, mistreated people for whom you feel only sorrow and pity. Children, black and white, tend to identify with people who overcome great obstacles due to their inherent strength. Finally, when performing black folk music for students, the focus should be upon how the song is performed, not upon what it is, because its method of performance determines the value.

WILL THE AUTHENTIC HARE PLEASE STAND UP: AN ANALYSIS OF JOEL CHANDLER HARRIS' UNCLE REMUS TALES

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The scholarship concerning Joel Chandler Harris' Uncle Remus tales, with only a few exceptions, has always been highly complimentary. Harris has been lauded as "the" interpreter of the "Negro." Supposedly, he was able to capture all the "quaint" humor of the slaves and transfer this humor onto paper. What he also transferred was his own racial prejudices ingrained in his mind throughout his boyhood in Georgia. The result was the creation of a storyteller who embodied all the stereotypical characteristics of black people as seen through the eyes of the white south. The Uncle Remus tales of Brer Rabbit, most of them animal folktales, became harmless, impotent stories told by a benign, old man instead of the animated, teaching instruments that they had been in the hands of the traditional African storyteller. Brer Rabbit lost much of the innate trickster characteristics and became, not the cunning, wily Hare, but a representation of a "mischievous" childlike people. Harris, in his introduction to *The Complete Tales of Uncle Remus*, links the characteristics of Brer Rabbit with the psychological development of the black people in America. After discussing his plans for the volume, he states:

> At least it is a fable thoroughly characteristic of the Negro; and it needs no scientific investigation to show why he selects as his hero the weakest and most harmless of all animals, and brings him out victorious in contests with the bear, the wolf, and the fox. It is not virtue that triumphs, but helplessness; it is not malice, but mischievousness.[1]

Harris felt the need to reinterpret the tales according to his own view of the world, and it was that view that today has placed the negative connotation on the tales themselves. For Brer Rabbit, minus Uncle Remus, is much closer to not only the tales as originally told by black Americans, but also more representative of the witty African trickster figure.

Many incidents influenced Harris' interpretation of the black folktales. His early life at Turnwold Plantation enabled him to familiarize himself with

[1] Joel Chandler Harris, *The Complete Tales of Uncle Remus* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1955), p. xxv. All references to the Brer Rabbit text will be from this edition.

both the classics in the Turnet library and the folktales of the blacks in the slave quarters. The description of the plantation, given by Julia Collier Harris, with its " . . . beautiful avenue of oaks, wide halls, high-ceiled rooms and its family burying-grounds . . . with graves covered by a matted carpet of periwinkles . . . "[2] is reminiscent of the idealic atmosphere that later became popular mettle among the plantation writers such as Thomas Nelson Page and George W. Cable.[3] No doubt the physical description of Turnwold was accurate; and for someone such as young Harris, the rich plantation life was a godsend.

Harris' job as a printer's apprentice enabled him to become involved with Turner's plantation newspaper, *The Countryman*. Within these pages, Harris read articles on the war, agriculture, politics, philosophy, literature, economics, and a variety of other subjects that later proved valuable to him.[4] Carrying the motto, "Independent in everything - neutral in nothing," the newspaper was Turner's vehicle for political activity. A member of the Georgia Legislature in 1860, Turner obviously influenced the thinking of young Harris during those five years. Harris' early works, one of which was a "cracker" letter to Abraham Lincoln, reflect a youthful, passionate desire to participate in the turmoil of the war. Signing the letter as Obadiah Skinflint, Harris tells Lincoln to leave Washington quicker than "a sheep can skin a 'simmon tree." He continues to berate Lincoln and the Abolitionists in the following lines: "W'y them thar skinatific Bobolitionists up thar could convert your own hullhide boots inter floatin' battries in less than no time."[5] This was Harris' first attempt at utilizing dialect to any extent.

During these early years, he also wrote a play about General Benjamin Butler called "Butler the Beast," an article called "The Recruits" about young men going to war, and a work featuring Andrew Jackson as a Southern martyr. Harris was a young writer reacting to the gradual deterioration of the old South. He was a witness to the hatred and destruction of a country beseiged by war. By 1865, Turner, joining other once prosperous men who had lost their wealth and their will to fight back, had printed the last edition of *The Countryman*. Turner closed the doors on the journalistic phase of his life with the proclamation that he would not edit a paper under Northern military control. So at the end of the war, Turner's plantation suffered from the same fate as other plantations--bankruptcy. Harris no longer felt the obligation to remain with his employer and left Turnwold to seek employment in other parts of the country. After working on various newspapers, Harris finally went to work for the Atlanta *Constitution*.

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[2]Julia Collier Harris, *The Life and Letters of Joel Chandler Harris* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1918), p. 24.

[3]These writers normally painted an idyllic picture of slavery.

[4]Harris, *Letters*, p. 29.

[5]*Ibid.*, p. 46.

In an 1879 editorial on "Literature in the South," printed in the Atlanta *Constitution*, Harris presented his ideas for a new Southern literature that would move toward a more honest representation of the South's people if the Southern writer was to survive in the literary world. Harris advocated " . . . an enlarged vision, broad sympathies and rational views as absolute essentials to perfect literary work." [6] Now a young husband and father, Harris developed from that early, over-zealous defender of Southern values to what he perceived as a mature writer independent of any political or regional partisanship. Supposedly, it was to this end of "honest representation" of the South's people that Harris introduced the characters of Uncle Remus and Brer Rabbit.

Because Uncle Remus is the main teller of the tales, the particular circumstances that gave birth to this peculiar characterization in the mind of a white Southern writer warrants some discussion before proceeding with the analysis of Brer Rabbit. During an interview for an Atlanta magazine, Harris stated that Uncle Remus " . . . was not an invention of my own, but a human syndication . . . of three or four old darkies . . . I just walloped them together." [7] Supposedly, these "old-time" darkies were those encountered during Harris' stay at Turnwold.

Living on the plantation during those five years allowed Harris to participate in the performance of many of the folktales. According to Stella Brewer Brookes, Harris was allowed this privilege because of his befriending of Mink, a runaway slave. He fed Mink instead of reporting him to Turner; and Mink, in return, made it very clear to the other blacks on the plantation that Harris was to be treated with the utmost respect.[8] Consequently, Harris witnessed some of the most valuable examples of plantation folklore. Accompanied by the Turner children, Harris visited the slave quarters nightly, listening to the tales and absorbing some of the folk "essence" that he would later try to transfer into the retelling of the tales. Brookes sees the Uncle Remus character that emerged as one of the few original characters that America produced for world consumption.[9] Granted the character was original, but he was not particularly authentic. The representation of the storyteller as a genial old man whose sole purpose was to recreate fantasy for a small boy seems to belie the physical description of Remus given in *Nights with Uncle Remus:*

> The figure of the old man, as he stood smiling upon the crowd of negroes, was picturesque in the extreme. He seemed to be taller than all the rest; and, notwithstanding his venerable appearance, he moved and spoke with all the vigor of youth. He had been the captain of the corn-pile, the stoutest at log-rolling, the swiftest with the hoe, the neatest with the

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[6] Paul M. Cousins, *Joel Chandler Harris* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1968), p. 108.

[7] Harris, *Letters*, p. 146.

[8] Stella Brewer Brookes, *Joel Chandler Harris: Folklorist* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1970), p. 7.

[9] Brookes, *J. C. Harris*, p. 48.

> plough, and the plantation hands still looked upon him as their leader.[10]

For a black man who has been one of the most respected and confident young slaves on the plantation to be reduced to the mere role of nursemaid offers a commentary on the slave system and on Harris' reliability as an observer. The American tradition that would relegate the tag of "boy" on a grown man is the same tradition that determined Uncle Remus' position in these tales. Both Stella Brookes and Paul Cousins devote considerable space to the environmental influences that shaped Harris as a folklorist. The "idyllic" plantation life that perpetuated a hierarchy of master-slave was one of the forces that influenced Harris' perception of life. Brookes' statement that the tales were "eyeopeners to the charm of the familiar"[11] for the South ignores the fact that the "familiar" was the Southerners' already distorted view of the black race. Harris was merely feeding this distortion in an attempt to maintain what he saw as most characteristic of the black. Just a cursory examination of the adjectives he uses in various instances to describe these characteristics, such as quaint, humorous, homely, instinctive, and simplistic, is enough to evaluate Harris' attitude toward full-grown black men.

Harris wished to picture for unfamiliar Northerners " . . . a Negro who had only pleasant memories of the discipline of slavery, and who had all the prejudices of caste and pride of family which were natural results of the system."[12] Is it any wonder that Harris needed a conglomeration of "old-time" darkies in order to form one slave who "naturally" felt an overwhelming sense of loyalty to the family who had provided for him out of the goodness of their collective heart? There has not been that "good a nigger" since Josiah Henson, the original Uncle Tom, voluntarily returned to his master from a free state.

Literally, Uncle Remus was not an original. He was, instead, the perpetuation of the stereotype traditionally relegated to the black man. In his article, Bernard Wolfe discusses Uncle Remus as being the forerunner in the American historical caricature of the black man:

> Aunt Jemima, Beulah, the Gold Dust Twins, "George" the Pullman-ad porter . . . We like to picture the Negro grinning at us. In Jack de Capitator, the bottle opener that looks like a gaping minstrel face. At Mammy's Shack, the Seattle roadside inn built in the shape of a minstrel's head, you walk into the neon grin to get your hamburger . . . it - signifies some bounty - for us. Eternally the Negro gives - . . . really gives.[13]

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[10]Joel Chandler Harris, *Nights with Uncle Remus* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1892), p. 400.

[11]Brookes, *J. C. Harris*, p. 43.

[12]Harris, *Letters*, p. 159.

[13]Bernard Wolfe, "Uncle Remus & the Malevolent Rabbit," in Alan Dundes, ed., *Mother Wit from the Laughing Barrel* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1973), p. 526.

Until the violence of the 1960's, America's image of the black race was that grinning minstrel Cream of Wheat chef who was only there to please. His sole function was to "hem n haw, bow n scrape" for Master, as long as Master deemed it necessary or entertaining. Literary portrayals of blacks were simply confirming America's *a priori* assumption about the place of black people, which was a shack behind the big house, telling tales to little children.

Undoubtedly, Harris was an excellent writer, capable of establishing rapport with his study subjects and formulating their tales into literary achievements. Whether he was also capable of escaping his own racist preconceptions still remains to be seen. Whether he could critically analyze the tales he collected in the field of folklore was another matter. Even Harris, himself, was quite surprised to find himself an authority on folklore. At first the new field fascinated him, but by the time the third book was published he very willingly stated that he would leave the folklore branch of the subject to others better equipped to handle that investigation.[14] Perhaps if he had become more involved with the folklore aspects he would have realized the damage he was causing to the interpretation of the tales with the introduction of Uncle Remus.

Even though his attempt to "keep Joel Chandler Harris as much out of my (his) work as possible,"[15] Harris must be given the credit for popularizing some of the tales of black Americans. Obviously, the next step is to disavow Hyder Rollins' statement that "only real Southerners can know the Negro."[16] Harris did think that he knew black people and that Uncle Remus was a valid representation. But if we are ever going to obtain the full value of the Brer Rabbit tales, we will have to analyze them minus "Uncle."

In the field of folklore, a vast majority of the tales involve the triumph of a small, cunning creature over a larger, less wily animal. Because so many folklorists have attached their own names to particular motifs within these tales, Propps' functions, Maranda's tendencies or Dundes' motifemes, no attempt will be made to classify the Brer Rabbit tales according to any specific tags, especially since I do not believe that they were even close to being complete.[17] Rather the remainder of this essay will be devoted to analyzing a few of the tales correctly classified as a part of the African trickster cycle, with the additional hope of introducing a new direction for future, more intensive studies of the Remus tales.

Probably the most important element of the African trickster cycle is that of False Friendship where the trickster feigns friendship with his

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[14] Brookes, *J. C. Harris*, p. 35.

[15] *Ibid.*, p. 36.

[16] Seymour Gross and John H. Hardy, eds., *Images of the Negro in American Literature* (Chicago: University Press, 1966), p. 6.

[17] For more information on classification see Stith Thompson, *Motif-Index of Folk Literature*, 6 vols. (Bloomington: University Press, 1958).

victim.[18] This friendship automatically establishes a variation of a human relationship where each partner is expected to fulfill certain contractual duties. Usually the trickster is not sincere in his friendship and will use the vulnerability of the other animals' trust to deceive them. Thus, by the end of the tale, the animals are no longer friends. Alan Dundes traced these elements of the trickster tales and classified thems as follows: 1) False Friendship--the trickster and another animal are announced as being friends, 2) Contract--the two animals enter into some agreement to accomplish some task, 3) Violation--one of the animals tricks the other and violates the contract, 4) Discovery--the victim realizes that he has been duped, and 5) End of the Friendship--Dundes states that many tales merely end at this point.[19] Lee Haring disagrees that the dissolving of friendship marks the end of the tale, although it is obviously an element in the scheme. He adds one more point that he calls Escape/Reward--the trickster usually gains something by his duping and is, therefore, better off than he was at the beginning of the tale. The trickster must escape or be rewarded for succeeding in duping his victim.[20] But regardless of whether there are five or six morphological elements, what is important is that the tales progress from an harmonious situation to a disharmonious one at the end. The frequency of the occurrence of the making and breaking of friendship in the various tales point out the importance of False Friendship within the African framework. Dundes sees this element of False Friendship as being predominantly of African origin with "relative absence in other narrative tradition areas of the world."[21] Although some of the tales would fit into Thomson's *Motif-Index*, Dundes is stressing the fact that they are not analyzed as friendship frames.

Considering the ontological system that existed in traditional Africa, revolving around a natural link between man, the spirit world, animals, and the elements, the breaking of a contractual agreement that binds one animal or human to another would necessarily be considered serious. The violation of the contract causes an imbalance of not only individual behavior patterns, but also of group behavior patterns. In a land where much emphasis is placed upon kinship and lineage, the responsibilities that each being has toward all others is not a light matter. Where these relationships are intricate parts of one's everyday life, the maintenance of those relationships is also the maintenance of the social order.[22] Because the characters in the tales live by a different

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[18]Lee Haring, "A Characteristic African Folktale Pattern," in Richard Dorson, ed., *African Folklore* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Co., 1972), p. 166.

[19]Alan Dundes, "The Making and Breaking of Friendship as a Structural Frame in African Folk Tales," in Pierre Maranda, ed., *Structural Analysis of Oral Tradition* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1971), p. 177.

[20]Haring, "Characteristic African Folktale," *African Folklore*, p. 167.

[21]Dundes, "Making and Breaking of Friendship," *Structural Analysis of Oral Tradition*, p. 179.

[22]For a complete discussion of the African ontological system, see John S. Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophies* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1970).

value system, it becomes insufficient to analyze these tales according to a European value system. Neither Thompson nor Aarne deal with African tales to any extent, thus avoiding the problem of more intensive investigation of this value system. Classifying tales according to a European framework and then analyzing both European and African tales can lead to some obvious misinterpretations for the African tales. Thus, Haring and Dundes' introduction to the False Friendship element should be very valuable in expanding the realm of motif study to include African tales more extensively.

In an 1893 article, A. Gerber presented the theory that many of the Uncle Remus tales had their origin in Africa instead of Europe. His theory was based on the premise that the more complex a tale, whether told in Africa, America, India or Europe, the more likely it is to have one original source. An example of his premise at work is shown in the following: "A woman in India and another in Europe should deceive their husbands by the same device, but we cannot imagine the wolf and the rabbit should in Africa and America independently reach the conclusion that they had better kill and sell their grandmothers."[23] Gerber presented evidence that a story with too many similar details, but told on different continents, had at least to have the same original source. The spreading of people into different regions and the augmentation of the tales by the storytellers may change certain characteristics of the tales, but the complex details would remain the same. Gerber then applies his theory to various Brer Rabbit tales, comparing the major traits with similar African tales.

With the new element of False Friendship, the analysis of these and other tales can be more thorough and, thereby, more closely linked with their African sources. In the first tale presented in *The Collected Works of Uncle Remus*, Brer Fox, in an attempt to capture Brer Rabbit, enters into a false friendship with him. A contract is made to meet for supper to discuss some business. Brer Fox violates the contract and attempts to capture Brer Rabbit, but the rabbit escapes.

Another tale places Brer Rabbit and Brer Wolf together. They formulate a plan to capture a cow and divide the meat equally (Contract). After the cow is captured, Brer Wolf attempts to take all of the meat (Violation). Brer Rabbit, in turn realizing that he cannot beat the Wolf, decides to trick him. He pretends that the meat is poisoned (Duping); and when Brer Wolf runs off, he takes the meat home (Reward).

In both of these tales, Brer Rabbit is able to achieve his purpose, in one case escape and the other reward, because of his wit. The realization that he must use his brains to overcome brawn is what keeps him from being destroyed by the other animals. Once the contract is violated by either of the parties, the other is no longer held responsible for the agreement. The second tale calls for what Dundes states as a "tit for tat" common in many African trickster tales. The first violation is done by Brer Wolf, but the second violation that will ultimately lead to the reward is done by Brer Rabbit, the trickster.

In another tale, Brer Rabbit and Brer Wolf make an agreement to kill their grandmothers and eat them. Brer Wolf kills his grandmother, and the

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[23] A. Gerber, "Uncle Remus Traced to the Old World," *Journal of American Folklore*, Vol. VI, n. xxiii (October, 1893), p. 246.

two animals eat her. When it comes time for Brer Rabbit to kill his grandmother, he hides her on top of a coconut tree. The Wolf tries to reach her and falls from the tree, breaking his neck in the process.

Here, once again, the trickster manipulates his dupe into doing whatever he wishes. The element of False Friendship is immediately apparent because of the aspects of the contractual agreement. Killing the grandmother would mean a violation of kinship relationship. Brer Rabbit would rather violate the contract with Brer Wolf than kill his own relative.

It is clear that the Uncle Remus tales bear deeper investigation. This paper provides a preliminary view of the Brer Rabbit tales minus Uncle Remus' negative stereotype. If we keep in mind that Uncle Remus was a white creation attached to black tales as a chief interpreter of those tales, we may be able so to divorce the "old-time darky" from a collection of excellent folktales. Without the necessity to equate the Brer Rabbit actions with the circumstances of the black man in America, the tales can be analyzed as the trickster tales that they are, and perhaps, more readily linked to their African origin. Dorson's belief that black American folklore has no link with Africa[24] could possibly be disputed with the body of Brer Rabbit tales if we can simply bury Uncle Remus; after all, theoretically he died a long time ago.

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[24]Richard Dorson, *American Negro Folktales* (Connecticut: Fawcett Publications, 1956), p. 16.

THE SCAPEGOAT ARCHETYPE IN RALPH ELLISON'S INVISIBLE MAN

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> People rationalize what they shun or are incapable of dealing with; these superstitions and their rationalizations become ritual as they govern behavior. The rituals become social forms, and it is one of the functions of the artist to recognize them and raise them to the level of art. (Ralph Ellison)

Most readers of Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* willingly acknowledge its power and the timeliness of its themes. Moreover, many realize that the novel derives much of its force and relevance from its rich mythic qualities. Recognizing this, literary critics have combed the pages of the novel in search of archetypes and ritualistic patterns. William J. Schafer's study of the hero motif, Robert Bone's analysis of the symbolic pattern of light and darkness, and George E. Kent's examination of folk ritual and tradition are representative of the many scholarly articles that have explored Ellison's use of myth and mythic conventions. Though dedicated in their efforts to uncover all, critics have not begun to tap the rich mythic associations and intimations lurking beneath the surface of the action in the novel.

The action in *Invisible Man* is rather simple--it is the story of a young black man's baffling experiences in the South and North. Students of myth and legend tend to see the protagonist's journey from oppression to invisibility as archetypal--an odyssey of one man's search for identity and self-awareness or a story describing the birth of a hero. But in a broader sense, *Invisible Man* transcends the boundaries of personal drama. If in part it tells of a young man's experiences on the road to self-discovery, it describes with equal intensity a society engaged on every level in destroying that identity. In the symbolic language of the novel, if it concerns the young man's attempt to recognize and grapple with his invisibility, it dramatizes even more vividly the process by which he becomes invisible. If the novel is a modern American tragedy, it moves with even greater force to develop a more penetrating theme which probes the depths of the human condition in modern America.

Invisible Man, then, is more than the classic story about the birth of a hero. On a deeper level, the substance of the novel emanates from the Jungian collective unconscious, and it emerges as a working out of the most archetypal of all situations--man's tendency to rid himself of sin and guilt by transferring them to another human being. In creating his characters and

shaping his drama, Ellison has drawn from the mythic conventions of the scapegoat ritual to enrich his narrative and to strike more deeply into the consciousness of his readers.

The scapegoat as an archetype is as familiar to readers of fiction as the myth of the hero. But because there exist no summaries of the scapegoat's career comparable to Joseph Campbell's text, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, few readers realize that the ritual surrounding the sacrifice of the scapegoat is as rich in imagery and structured in form as the myth of the hero. Like the hero, the scapegoat, too, passes through a series of ordeals and participates in a complex series of rites before his ritual can be deemed complete. If we can rely on Sir James Frazer's discussion of the scapegoat's career in *The Golden Bough* as standard, we can see how Ellison was moved, either consciously or unconsciously, to use this myth not only to give form and structure to his novel, but to develop scapegoat victimization as symbolic of the primitivism that governs the actions of modern man.

According to Frazer, the motivating force behind the sacrifice of the scapegoat is the principle of vicarious suffering--an innate tendency in man to castigate others for the sin for which he himself is unwilling to atone. Frazer found that the steps of progression in the scapegoat ritual were clearly defined. The interval between celebrations of the ceremony is "commonly a year, and the time of the year when the ceremony takes place usually coincides with some well-marked change of season."[1] Often a religious celebration or a fertility rite, the ritual is performed with the consent and sanction of the total community. Although the scapegoat is chosen by a variety of methods, the most frequently selected victims, according to Frazer, fall into three distinct categories. One is the "marked or defected individual." His physical ailment, either natural or inflicted, singles him out for persecution. The people of Asia Minor, Uganda, and Greece practiced choosing deformed persons.[2] A second type of victim is the "ethically inferior" or "those persons who fail to live up to the absolute values of the collective."[3] Prostitutes and wanton criminals were victimized in the primitive cultures of Siam and Tibet.[4] A third class of scapegoat is the innately "superior, for example, leaders and men of genius."[5] This particular phenomenon has its roots in ancient civilizations where a dying god or king was selected to fill the position. In Jacob Bronowski's study of the scapegoat as King, he found that the practice originated as an attempt to satisfy two deep-seated needs of primitive peoples--the desire for a scapegoat to assume the community's guilt and the need to dispose of an aging ineffective ruler. "Caricatures of royalty, the boys and the idiots,

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[1]Sir James G. Frazer, *The Golden Bough* (London: Macmillan and Company, Ltd., 1913), p. 224.

[2]*Ibid.*, p. 255.

[3]Erich Neumann, "The Scapegoat Psychology," *Depth Psychology and a New Ethic* (New York: Hodder and Stoughton, Ltd., and the C. G. Jung Foundation for Analytical Psychology, 1969), p. 46.

[4]Frazer, *Golden Bough*, p. 212.

[5]Neumann, "Scapegoat Psychology," *Depth Psychology*, p. 47.

the dwarfs and the slaves" were often chosen to proxy for dying kings in the sacrificial rite.[6]

Following the selection, there is frequently elaborate preparation for the remainder of the ritual. The victim is oftentimes treated royally during confinement. Among the Yorubas in West Africa, the scapegoat is "well fed and nourished and supplied with whatever he should desire."[7] The period of confinement is generally followed by public exhibition where the victim is "paraded through the streets of the town or city" for all to behold.[8] Then the savagery begins.

The victim might undergo several forms of physical torture. He may be merely banished. Or he might suffer fatally as a result of being whipped, stoned, hanged, burned, dragged, stabbed, or boiled alive. The most violent segment of the ritual is followed by expulsion of either the tortured victim or his corpse.

The end of the sacrifice frequently marks the Saturnalia. In rare cases, it may precede the sacrifice, as in Guinea and Tonquin. This period of general license is a time of uninhibited rejoicing. Men are allowed to give free reign to their passions. No offense is punishable. Food and intoxicants are abundant, free and servile classes are allowed to mingle freely, and sexual infidelity is rampant. It is a time of great joy, for the community has been cleansed of sin, and only the victim suffers for its evil. In brief, then, the ceremony can be divided into the following segments: selection, preparation (confinement), public exhibition, sacrifice or offering, expulsion, and Saturnalia.

The experiences of the Invisible Man, a nameless young southern black, seem to follow the loose form of the scapegoat myth. The battle royal scene at the beginning not only introduces the scapegoat pattern for the rest of the novel but signals the reader that the protagonist has been selected to reenact the role of victim in a timeless primeval drama. It is the grandfather who forewarns him of the sacrificial role he is destined to play again and again throughout the novel. "Live with your head in the lion's mouth . . . ," he says, "let 'em swoller you till they vomit and bust wide ope." In his reaction to the old man's advice, we sense his connection with myth and ritual: "it was as though I was carrying out his advice in spite of myself. And to make it worse, everyone loved me for it. I was praised by the most lily-white men of the town." Compelled by forces from within and without, the protagonist is powerless to refuse the position he has been selected to assume. And like the scapegoat of myth and ritual, Ellison's Invisible Man is singled out for the most severe persecution at the battle royal due to a physical peculiarity, a distinct mark, his color. Someone at the smoker yells out: "I want to get at that ginger-colored nigger. Tear him limb from limb." His selection sets in motion a series of ritualistic experiences symbolic of the evolutionary past of the black man in

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[6]Jacob Bronowski, "The Scapegoat King," *The Face of Violence* (New York: George Braziller, Inc., 1955), p. 39.

[7]Frazer, *Golden Bough*, p. 211.

[8]*Ibid.*

America, a past shaped and determined by forces of guilt and oppression which not only provide the impetus for scapegoat victimization but keep it in motion.

In the battle royal scene, the protagonist and the other young black men are forced to participate in an obscene boxing match. The selection of the scapegoat is conducted with total community sanction. "They were all there," the protagonist observes, "bankers, lawyers, judges, doctors, fire chiefs, teachers, merchants," symbolic of the collective spirit. From the site of confinement, a "servant's elevator" where the boys are crowded together, they are herded to "a large room" and put on exhibition. In the traditional ritual the scapegoat is frequently treated royally during the period of confinement. In an ironic reversal of this, the scapegoats are tempted with the sweet fruits of American life, yet are simultaneously denied them. A nude blonde is paraded before them, but they are forbidden to touch. "Gold pieces" are thrown around them on an electrified rug which jolts each boy with an electric shock as he reaches for them. The chosen individuals are subjected to every possible humiliation, symbolic of the Negro's degradation in American society.

The physical torture inflicted at the battle royal foreshadows the more brutal sacrifice that will occur at the climax of the novel. Oddly enough, it is not the community which directly inflicts suffering here, for the boys are forced to bruise and mutilate each other. According to Robert A. Bone, this slight deviation from the ritual can be explained in symbolic terms. He concludes that "the boys are thrust blindfolded into a boxing ring and forced to fight one another rather than, symbolically, their real enemy, the white man."[9] In terms of the myth of the scapegoat, however, Erich Neuman provides us with a more revealing interpretation. Newman contends that the more civilized man becomes, the less aware he is psychologically of a need for a scapegoat. Thus, "the ritual is nowadays no longer conscious but unconscious."[10] By forcing the boys to, in a sense, sacrifice themselves, the community is perhaps attempting to bury its primitive urges even more deeply into the unconscious, thus further removing from themselves the guilt that the very presence of blackness makes them conscious of.

At the conclusion of the mock sacrifice, the expulsion follows quickly. The other boys are abruptly dismissed. The Invisible Man's expulsion, however, has complex, ironic implications. In spite of the humiliation suffered, he is permitted to deliver his speech, rewarded by a briefcase and a four-year scholarship. Ironically, what he sees as rewards are, in actuality, expulsion papers which are captioned: "Keep that nigger-boy running." Being allowed to remain and deliver his speech constitutes a more serious expulsion, for he, like the race he symbolizes, is doomed to seek the success America will continuously deny him.

But it is with repetition and a gradual reshaping of the same ritualistic pattern throughout the novel that Ellison controls the form and structure of his story. In terms of symmetry, the novel can be perceived as an interlocking series of scapegoat rituals which chronicle the Invisible Man's sacrifice to and expulsion by three related power structures: the black college, the capitalistic industrial sector, and the Brotherhood. In each of the divisions

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[9]Robert A. Bone, *The Negro Novel in America* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, Inc., 1958), p. 203.

[10]Neumann, "Scapegoat Psychology," *Depth Psychology*, p. 47.

of the novel, there is evidence of recurrent imagery drawn from elements of the scapegoat myth--specifically the primitive practice of substituting the fool for king as the victim in the sacrificial role. For having exposed Mr. Norton to the truth of the black man's plight in the form of Trueblood, the young man is punished by expulsion from the college. His executioner, surprisingly, is Dr. Bledsoe, president, a man whom he admires, envies, and, in his words, someday hopes to "replace." Upon dismissing the Invisible Man, the power-hungry Bledsoe bellows, "I'm still the King down here." In terms of the novel's racial allegory, Bledsoe represents the "whitenized" black middle class in conspiracy with whites to erase all forms of the black culture.

But there is added significance in the fact that the pattern repeats itself in the protagonist's experience with Lucius Brockway, the colored foreman at the Liberty Paints company where he works in New York. In a sense, Brockway is Bledsoe transplanted to an industrial setting--the "boss" of the company, for he knows more about the manufacture of the paint than the white man who owns it. Symbolizing the black base on which agricultural and industrial America was founded, he is the King for which the protagonist must proxy. His suitability for the role is implied in his antagonism toward the Invisible Man. Imagining that the boy covets his position, Brockway snarls, "Here I am running things by myself all these years and now they keep trying to send me some assistant." The section climaxes in a mock sacrifice when the boy is injured almost fatally by a mechanical explosion.

In the final section of the text, the Invisible Man is expelled from the Brotherhood. Accused of failing to follow the party line by trying to usurp Brother Jack's power, he is booted out of party ranks. This represents the final foreshadowing of his more dramatic expulsion from human society at the climax of the novel. As the words and images repeat themselves, we see Ellison achieving a kind of cumulative symbolic effect. In each situation, the young man's role as caricature, as an imitation of the real thing, has significance on a higher level. The Invisible Man, like the race he represents, becomes the white man's fool by his enslavement to white ideals which he can never attain. Ironically, the protagonist helps to bring about his own sacrifice. Ellison suggests that sacrificing black identity for myths and illusions fabricated by a white world constitutes a kind of self destruction.

At the resolution of the novel, the actual blood sacrifice, however, takes place in the dreamy world of the protagonist's mind. Recovering from blows received while escaping a race riot, the Invisible Man dreams he is beaten unmercifully by a group of his former enemies. Castrated, but "free of illusion," the protagonist symbolically achieves the power to shake off the ties that bind him to scapegoat victimization. Only then and there, in the underground, is he able to come to terms with the forces which have operated to render him invisible.

The pattern repeats itself in the lives of other victims in the novel who differ from the protagonist only in the type of scapegoat category into which each fits. Jim Trueblood, the colored sharecropper accused of having incestuous relations with his daughter, epitomizes the scapegoat chosen because he is

"ethically inferior." As the "full blooded, half-assimilated African,"[11] Trueblood is singled out by both black and white segments of the community to fill the scapegoat role. Hated by the faculty and students at the black college, Trueblood represents the image of the primitive black that they have endeavored to erase. Whites also regard him with good-natured contempt. But it is the magical and mythical quality of his personality that clues us to his suitability as a sacrificial victim. Ellison builds his description of Trueblood with the language of myth. He "told the old stories with a sense of humor and magic that made them alive," the protagonist says. When he talks, his voice takes on "a deep incantatory quality." Whites are awed by the "earthy harmonies" and the "crude, high, plaintively animal sounds [of] Trublood" makes when he sings his "primitive spirituals." Ellison's use of mythic imagery in his characterization of Trueblood not only deepens our sense of the ritualistic role he is about to play, but prepares us for the irony and symbolism that colors his sacrifice.

In a sense, Trueblood has experienced a lifetime preparation for his ritualistic role. Rather than being "fattened for the kill," he and his family have been starved by a brutal sharecropper system that perpetuates poverty. The site of his confinement, in keeping with his condition, is an old log cabin in which his family has barely subsisted without sufficient clothing and heat. In truth, he, the daughter, and wife share the same bed only in an effort to keep warm. Is Ellison implying that society has willed black destruction symbolized by the chaos into which Trueblood is plunged? The sharecropper's lament about his condition and the puzzling consequences of his incestuous act further underscores the irony of the situation: "Fore they heard about what happened to us out here I couldn't git no help from nobody. Now lotta folks is curious and goes outta they way to help." The symbolic implications that emerge are that blacks are only rewarded when they corroborate white preconceived ideas about black inferiority, an act which thus justifies the suffering and oppression they have endured.

The aftermath of Trueblood's experience takes on a Saturnalism quality, as food, money, and clothes pour in from all segments of the guilt-ridden community. The repressed guilt of the white society is symbolized by the presence of Mr. Norton, a wealthy Boston philanthropist and trustee at the college. Harboring an incestuous desire for his own daughter, whom he describes as a "beautiful and rare creature" that he could never believe "to be [his] own flesh and blood," Norton rewards Trueblood with one hundred dollars for achieving what he himself had desired. Erich Neumann, again, offers the best explanation for the disturbing psychological implications of this incident. Neumann contends that certain uncivilized tendencies within modern man "cannot be accepted as a negative part of one's own psyche and are therefore projected--that is, . . . transferred to the outside world and experienced as an outside object. It is combated, punished, and exterminated as 'the alien out there,' instead of being dealt with as 'one's own inner problem.'"[12] Thus Trueblood, while he suffers mental anguish for his distardly sin, is rewarded for having assumed the guilt and acted out the repressed desires of his white neighbors. Ironically, he emerges as the real hero in the situation. "I am a man and a man don't leave his family," he says. In spite of having committed a less than heroic act, it is he who commands the readers' respect by his refusal to abandon his family in the face of chaos. Given the

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11[illegible]e, *Negro Novel*, p. 204.

12Neumann, "Scapegoat Psychology," *Depth Psychology*, p. 43.

uniqueness of the situation, he demonstrates a kind of rare courage that his oppressors do not possess, for he at least has come to terms with himself.

Tod Clifton, a black leader in the Brotherhood, represents yet another type of sacrificial victim--the superior person frequently victimized in civilized societies. In creating this character, Ellison combines both religious elements and the mythic imagery of the scapegoat. Ras, the black nationalist, likens Clifton to a "black King." "He possessed the chiseled, black marble features sometimes found on statues . . . ," the Invisible Man observes. His name reminds us of his sacrificial function and draws a parallel between him and the "God" of Christian myth who died for the sins of us all.

Clifton's sacrifice comes suddenly. Having discovered that the Brotherhood was the traitor and not the saviour of black people, Clifton is reduced to selling black sambo dolls on the streets of Harlem, symbolic of the black man's role as puppets of the Brotherhood and indeed of the entire power structure.

The funeral represents the final act in the ceremonial sacrifice of the scapegoat. The poetic quality of Clifton's eulogy signals the relationship between him and Trueblood and gives added meaning to the event, the death of a black god: "His name was Clifton, Tod Clifton, he was unarmed and his death was as senseless as his life was futile. He had struggled for Brotherhood on a hundred street corners and he thought it would make him more human, but he died like any dog in a road."

Yet, Clifton's funeral has a deeper, more disturbing significance for the black community. How can we account for the troubled feelings his death arouses among the blacks who mourn his death. The protagonist is puzzled not only by the presence of so many, but by the intense emotion that the funeral singing arouses in the crowd. He says: "I looked down into their sun-swept faces, digging for the words, and feeling a futility about it all and an anger. For this they gathered by thousands. What were they waiting to hear? Why had they come? For what reason that was different from that which had made the red-cheeked boy thrill at Clifton's falling to the earth? What did they want and what could they do?" Perhaps there was little difference between them and the "red-cheeked boy" who thrilled at Clifton's death. Is the singing the key? Is it perhaps an outward manifestation of the secret rejoicing that Tod, like the God he symbolizes, had died that they might live? The Invisible Man acknowledges the existence of this urge within his own breast: "I knew that I had known it too and had failed to release it out of shame and fear." Does joining in song represent a cathartic act that purges each black person of the fear he harbors that Clifton's fate might have been his own and the shame he feels for rejoicing in having escaped?

The gripping irony that confronts the reader is this dramatic scene represents the final stage in the development of a theme that permeates the novel--the shared guilt of black and white Americans. Scapegoat victimization cuts both ways in this society, emblematic of the fact that neither ethnic group has succeeded in escaping those destructive tendencies which continue to warp and erode American life.

Only at the end of the novel is the protagonist able to break the scapegoat pattern by coming to terms with himself, symbolized by the deeper

significance that he attaches to his grandfather's advice: "Wish 'em to death and destruction." His growth becomes apparent in his final words on the subject: "Hell, weren't they their own death and their own destruction except as the principle lived in them and in us? And here's the cream of the joke: Weren't we part of them as well as apart from them and subject to die when they died?" Wishing whites to their death can only result in the inevitable destruction of the black race itself. Ellison suggests that the destinies of the two races are inextricably connected.

But Ellison's novel transcends black-white issues, for he is interested in probing man's unconscious and searching for symbolic representations of states of mind. He has reached into the depths of the human psyche and developed a story emanating from the scapegoat myth that is a parable of our own times. The individuals in the novel who stand as representatives of an oppressive society--Norton, Bledsoe, and Brother Jack--are but reflections of ourselves. Like them, we too often seek to escape the reality of self--of internal conflicts, of personal inadequacies through repression directed inwardly or violence directed outwardly.

The question of self and survival, of identity and existence, that the novelist poses is one which touches all our lives. Through the tragic experiences of one sacrificial victim, Ellison reminds us of the enslavement inherent in us all.

THE FOLKLORE ELEMENTS IN RALPH ELLISON'S INVISIBLE MAN

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Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* is squarely based on Afro-American folklore. It is a veritable literary gumbo brimming with all forms of Afro-American folklore. Ellison has blended spirituals, blues, jazz; children's rhymes; the dozens, toasts, proverbs, folk sayings; folk characters Peter Wheatstraw, High John-the-Conqueror, Brer Rabbit, Tar Baby; folktales; jokes; sermons; stereotypes; folk beliefs and customs; traditional food; and the folk themes of freedom, trickery, and the tabooed white woman into a powerful novel that explores the human condition from the too-seldom-used vantage point of Afro-American folk culture.

This combination of traditional culture and the novel form is no accident. Ellison based *Invisible Man* on Afro-American folklore because to him it represents the Afro-American's attempt to humanize the world. Following the examples of Eliot, Joyce, Dostoevsky, and Gogol, Ellison turned inward to explore his group's folk culture in order to write about mankind. Being a true evangelist of this folklore gospel, Ellison admonishes his fellow black writers to do the same:

> For us the question should be, What are the specific forms of that [Negro] humanity, and what in our background is worth preserving or abandoning. The clue to this can be found in folklore, which offers the first drawings of any group's character. It preserves mainly those situations which have repeated themselves again and again in the history of any given group. It describes those rites, manners, customs, and so forth, which insure the good life, or destroy it; and it describes those boundaries of feeling, thought and action which that particular group has found to be the limitation of the human condition. It projects this wisdom in symbols which express the group's will to survive; it embodies those values by which the group lives and dies. These drawings may be crude but they are nonetheless profound in that they represent the group's attempt to humanize the world.[1]

It should come as no surprise that the folklore elements in Ellison's novel have been analyzed many times. There have been structural studies of

[1]Ralph Ellison, *Shadow and Act* (New York: Vintage Books, 1972), pp. 170-171.

Invisible Man which compare it to Vladimir Propp's *Morphology of the Folktale*, Lord Raglan's *The Hero*,[2] and Homer's *Odyssey*;[3] the novel's characters have been analyzed as stereotypes,[4] modern versions of traditional folklore characters,[5] and men of words;[6] while Ellison has been studied as an active bearer of Afro-American folk tradition[7] and as a practitioner of cultural nationalism.[8]

This study will focus on the genres of Afro-American oral tradition and the positive folk image used by Ellison in *Invisible Man*. Afro-American culture is an oral one;[9] and Ellison has captured the cadence, imagery, wit, and varying sounds of such traditional forms of Afro-American folk literature as the dozens, jokes, toasts, folktales, and sermons. The cultural precision of his writing also allows the reader to see and appreciate those black men of words as oral artists.

Ellison used the dozens, jokes, and toasts essentially to give a cultural flavor to his work and re-emphasizes the fact that these forms of human expression give form and color to the Afro-American's view of life. The hero engages in several dozens' contests, that traditional verbal game played by many Afro-Americans.[10] While coming out of a coma, he is asked for his mother's name by the attending white doctor. The question triggers this ritual response: "I

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[2]Lawrence J. Clipper, "Folkloric and Mythic Elements in *Invisible Man*," *CLA Journal*, XIII:3 (March, 1970), pp. 229-241.

[3]Archie D. Sanders, "Odysesseus in Black: An Analysis of the Structure of *Invisible Man*," *CLA Journal*, XIII:3 (March, 1970), pp. 217-228.

[4]R. W. Nash, "Stereotypes and Social Types in Ellison's *Invisible Man*," *Sociological Quarterly*, VI (Autumn, 1965), pp. 349-360; and Eleanor R. Wilner, "The Invisible Black Thread: Identity and Nonentity in *Invisible Man*," *CLA Journal*, XIII:3 (March, 1970), pp. 242-257.

[5]Floyd R. Horowitz, "Ralph Ellison's Modern Version of Brer Bear and Brer Rabbit in *Invisible Man*," *Mid-Continent American Studies Journal*, IV:2 (1963), pp. 21-27.

[6]Lloyd W. Brown, "Ralph Ellison's Exhorters: The Role of Rhetoric in *Invisible Man*," *CLA Journal*, XIII:3 (March, 1970), pp. 289-303.

[7]George E. Kent, "Ralph Ellison and Afro-American Folk and Cultural Tradition," *CLA Journal*, XIII:3 (March, 1970), pp. 265-276.

[8]Larry Neal, "Politics as Ritual: Ellison's Zoot Suit," *Black World*, 20 (December, 1970), pp. 31-52.

[9]Ben Sidran, *Black Talk* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, (1971), pp. 1-29.

[10]For studies of the dozens, see: John Dollard, "The Dozens: Dialectic of Insult," pp. 277-295; Roger D. Abrahams, "Playing the Dozens," pp. 295-309; Claudia Mitchell-Kernan, "Signifying," pp. 310-328, in *Mother Wit from the Laughing Barrel: Readings in the Interpretation of Afro-American Folklore*, Alan Dundes, ed., (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1973); and William Labov, "Rules for Ritual Insults," pp. 265-314, and Claudia Mitchell-Kernan, "Signifying, Loud-Talking and Marking," pp. 315-335, in *Rappin' and Stylin' Out: Communication in Urban Black America*, Thomas Kochman, ed., (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1972).

looked at him, feeling a quick dislike and thinking, half in amusement, I don't play the dozens. And how's *your* old lady today." (p. 183) On another occasion he is miffed by Brother Jack's badgering and responds to Brother Jack's question about where he got permission to stage Tod Clifton's funeral with the dozens' rejoinder, "From your ma - -." (p. 350) There are two heated verbal exchanges between the hero and fellow blacks. The hero's battle royal opponent rejects his bribe to throw a fight with the command: "Give it to your ma . . ." (p. 20) But in a later argument with Mr. Brockway, the hero makes good use of the ritual insults that were taught to him by his grandfather. After making fun of Mr. Brockway's age, the hero continued his assault in this true dozens' tradition: "Why, you old-fashioned, slavery-time, mammy-made, handkerchief-head bastard, you should know better!" (p. 172)

Ellison also made great use of Afro-American jokelore.[11] The theme of the tabooed white woman appears throughout the novel. Ellison makes this point at one place in his novel in combining biblical and white American images of woman. While riding the subway, the hero clearly saw the white woman seated opposite him as the reincarnation of the temptress Eve. Ellison knowingly wrote: "Across the isle a young platinum blonde nibbled at a red Delicious apple as station lights rippled past behind her." (p. 190) Earlier in the novel the hero's embarrassment at being jammed tightly against a white woman reads like numerous jokes found in black oral tradition. This cycle of jokes briefly surfaced in the hero's consciousness as he lay in full view of the wealthy matron's cuckolded husband. Though gripped with fear, his "mind whirled with forgotten stories of male servants summoned to wash the mistress' back; chauffeurs sharing the masters' wives ; Pullman porters invited into the drawing room of rich wives headed for Reno . . . ." (p. 314) The theme also appears amidst the Harlem riot. Legend has it that the riot started when a black boy was arrested for stealing a Baby Ruth candy bar. As one rioter put it: "Some fellow said the kid made the paddy mad by grabbing a candy named after a white woman." (p. 408) This joke is kin to the one about the black man forced to ask for a can of "Mr." Prince Albert tobacco because "there's a white man on the can."

Ellison demonstrated his writing virtuosity by capturing the sounds and cadence of the toast on paper.[12] This bawdy darker brother of frontier America's ringtailed roarers and grandfather of Muhammad Ali's taunts has been skillfully reduced from ear to eye by Ellison in this culturally true dialogue between the hero and the junkman:

> "All it takes to get along in this here man's town is a little shit, grit and motherwit. And man, I was bawn with all three. In fact, I'maseventhsonofaseventhsonbawnwithacauloverbotheyesandraisedon-blackcatboneshighjohntheconquerorandgreasygreens - -," he spieled with twinkling eyes, his lips working rapidly. "You dig me, daddy?"

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[11] J. Mason Brewer, *Worser Days and Better Times: The Folklore of the North Carolina Negro* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1965); and Richard M. Dorson, *Negro Folktales in Michigan* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1956).

[12] For toast scholarship, see: Roger D. Abrahams, *Deep Down in the Jungles: Negro Narrative Folklore from the Streets of Philadelphia* (Chicago: Aldine Publishing Company, 1970); and Bruce Jackson, *Get Your Ass in the Water and Swim Like Me: Narrative Poetry from Black Oral Tradition* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1974).

"You're going too fast," I said, beginning to laugh.

"Okay, I'm slowing down. I'll verse you but I won't curse you - - My name is Peter Wheatstraw, I'm the Devil's only son-in-law, so roll 'em! You a southern boy, ain't you?" he said, his head to one side like a bear's.

"Yes," I said.

"Well, get with it! My name's Blue and I'm coming at you with a pitchfork. Fi Fi Fo Fum. Who wants to shoot the Devil one, Lord Stingeroy!"

He had me grinning despite myself. I liked the words though I didn't know the answer. I'd known the stuff from childhood, but had forgotten it; had learned it back of school . . . (p. 134)

Ellison has once again dipped deep into Afro-American verbal art. Peter Wheatstraw toasts have been recently recorded by the night club entertainer, Rudy Ray Moore; and an East St. Louis bluesman of the thirties, William Bunch, not only used Peetie Wheatstraw as a stage name, but also wrote and recorded the blues, "Peetie Wheatstraw Stomp," which had these traditional toast lines in its lyrics:

Everybody hollering, "Here come that Peetie Wheatstraw."
Everybody hollering, "Here come that Peetie Wheatstraw."
Now, he's better known by the Devil's Son-in-Law.[13]

However, these dozens, jokes, and toasts remain on "the yam level" (p. 202) and do not begin to touch the full human and literary possibilities of Afro-American folklore. It is with the folktale[14] and sermon[15] that Ellison begins to fully exploit the literary potential of Afro-American oral literature. In his creative mind, folktale personna like Brer Rabbit (pp. 183-184) and Tar Baby (pp. 173-175) are stretched and fashioned into new literary molds. An excellent case in point is Ellison's imposing the old Tar Baby story on the conclusion of the hero's relationship with Mr. Brockway. Mr. Brockway becomes the Tar Baby (p. 173) and the hero the rabbit, who is this time stuck to the pressure wheel of a boiler which is about to explode. And at a still higher level, Ellison captures the oral style of the traditional black tale teller in two sections of his book.[16] Both the Jim Trueblood incest memorat (pp. 36-52) and the nameless Harlem rioter's account of the riot (pp. 424-426) are written in this style. Furthermore, Ellison describes Jim Trueblood as being a "good tenor singer" and "one who told the old stories with

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[13]Paul Garor, *The Devil's Son-in-Law: The Story of Peetie Wheatstraw and His Songs* (London: Studio Vista, 1971), p. 72.

[14]For a collection of black folktales, read: Zora Neal Hurston, *Mules and Men: Negro Folktales and Voodoo Practices in the South* (New York: Harper & Row, 1970), pp. 1-228.

[15]For the study of the style and poetry of the black sermon, see: Henry H. Mitchell, *Black Preaching* (New York: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1970); Bruce A. Rosenberg, *The Art of the American Folk Preacher* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970); and Hortense J. Spillers, "Martin Luther King and the Style of the Black Sermon," *The Black Scholar*, 3:1 (September, 1971), pp. 14-27.

[16]For a study of storytelling styles, see: Linda Dégh, *Folktales and Society: Story-Telling in a Hungarian Peasant Community*, Emily M. Schossberger, trans. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1969).

a sense of humor and a magic that made them come alive." (p. 36) Thus, in these two sections, Ellison develops his characters, affirms the universality of Afro-American folklore, and develops the plot and tone of his novel by skillfully reproducing the oral style of the black storyteller.

However, Ellison saved his greatest literary creativity for the sermon. As with the storyteller's artistry, the hero is also aware of the difference between preaching styles. His ear is culturally attuned enough to know that there is a great deal of difference between the college chaplain's "short formal sermons" and other sermons shouted with the "wild emotion of the crude preachers most of us knew in our home towns and of whom we were deeply ashamed . . ." (p. 86) The first sermon to appear in the novel is such a sermon; it is a coarse, affirming cry of blackness. (pp. 7-8) While in his reefer induced slumber, the hero hears a traditional black preacher proclaim: "In the beginning . . . there was blackness. . . ." (p. 7) The second sermon is a silent tribute to Miss Susie Gresham, an ex-slave living out her days as a matron for the school's co-eds. (pp. 88-89) With his mind's voice, he silently paid her this ringing tribute of tradition bearer: " . . . you, relic of slavery whom the campus loved but did not understand, aged, of slavery, yet bearer of something warm and vital and all-enduring. . . ." (p. 89) The third sermon is blind Reverend Barbee's founder's tribute, a literary trombone which expresses and affirms the group's values of hope, faith, and endurance, and sounds the folk determination to triumph over America's racial injustice and one day be free. (pp. 91-104) Reading this speech, one is reminded of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s, traditional eloquence. The fourth sermon is the hero's eulogy of Tod Clifton, an angry denouncement of America's inhumanity to blacks, which has the language, imagery, and nuances of Malcolm X's harangues. (pp. 343-347) Like Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John of the New Testament canon, in these four sermons Ellison has summed up all of the anger, frustrations, hopes, and values of the Afro-American folk community.

The literary development of the hero is connected to the Afro-American oral tradition. Throughout the novel he is impressed and influenced by the artistry and verbal power of various black men of words.[17] In addition to Jim Trueblood, Reverend Barbee, Dr. Bledsoe, the junkman, and the nameless Harlem rioter, Ellison's hero is impressed by the non-traditional way in which the crazy veteran talked to Mr. Norton at the Golden Day. He confessed: "I received a fearful satisfaction from hearing him talk as he had to a white man." (p. 71) He was also influenced by the ranting of Ras the Destroyer, noting that after hearing him speak for the first time he "was puzzled, both by the effect of his voice upon me and by the obvious anger of the crowd." (p. 122) One can chart the hero's oral development from a frightened high school commencement speaker, who stumbled and "spoke automatically," (p. 24) to a mature black man of words in full command of the black oral tradition. In his first Brotherhood speech, he averts disaster by falling back upon the traditional formula of the "old down-to-earth, I'm-sick-and-tired-of-the-way-they've-been-treating-us approach." (p. 259) He knew how to make "contact" and interact with an audience. (p. 258) In short, by the novel's end, Ellison's hero knows how to "talk that talk" and has become a mastor orator.

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[17]For a study of the black man of words, see: Roger D. Abrahams, "Joking: The Training of the Man of Words in Talking Broad," in *Rappin' and Stylin' Out: Communication in Urban Black America,* Thomas Kochman, ed., (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1972), pp. 215-240.

He admits as much in this candid word self-portrait: "I am an orator, a rabble rouser - - Am? I was, and perhaps shall be again. Who knows?" (p. 11)

Finally, the affirmation of black people and their culture is a constant theme woven throughout the novel's plot. The hero's grandfather has a folk wisdom which transcended Dr. Bledsoe's formal knowledge--he had deciphered Bledsoe's note long before his grandson did; Miss Susie Gresham was a bearer of folk culture; and Miss Mary Rambo was armed with the breastplate of black folklore which allowed her to survive and thrive in New York City. As if responding to the traditional call of black preachers, throughout his novel Ellison pauses to point out the strength, power, and beauty of the black mass's folk culture. One instance is found during Tod Clifton's funeral when a nameless tuba player and an unknown husky baritone singer lift the spirit of the marchers with their duet of the spiritual, "There's Many a Thousand Gone," an event which Ellison described thusly: "He sang with his whole body, phrasing each verse as naturally as he walked, his voice rising above all the others, blending with that of the lucid horn." (p. 342) And the hero is reminded of his people's traditional resources which allow them to meaningfully deal with death. While listening to the call-response patterns of the singer and the marchers, the hero mused that: "It was as though the song had been there all the time and he knew it and aroused it; and I knew that I had known it too and had failed to raise it out of a vague, nameless shame or fear." (p. 342) In short, Ellison is here affirming that there is a traditional power in the souls of black folk.

Ellison also affirms the black mass's ability to act independently in his Dupre episode. (pp. 406-415) It is interesting to note that Ellison has named the Harlem riot leader Dupre. With this naming he conjours up the image of the black folk hero Dupree, the lover of Betty.[18] Once again Ellison affirms the humanity of blacks by showing that Dupre and his followers were interested in demonstrating against their slum landlord by burning his tenement building down. The hero's first-hand account of this act of arson contrasts sharply with Brother Jack's image of the formless mass. The hero learns that they are capable of leading themselves. For he thinks as he rushes from the burning building: "They did it themselves . . . planned it, organized it, applied the flame." (p. 414) With such a deep respect for black folk and their culture, it is not surprising that Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* is crammed with the themes and forms of Afro-American folklore.

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[18]For a version of "Dupree and Betty Blues," see: Langston Hughes and Arna Bontemps, eds., *Book of Negro Folklore* (New York: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1958), pp. 347-349).

CHARLES CHESNUTT'S THE CONJURE WOMAN: A PROPHECY OF THE CONTEMPORARY WHITE AMERICAN FAMILY

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As Charles Chesnutt reported in "Superstitions & Folklore of the South," he made a study of folklore in North Carolina.[1] The tales in *The Conjure Woman* (1899), although fictional, are typical of the kinds of conjure tales he had collected. Conjure stories are generated from a fairly rigid formula: a person who wants something which seems unattainable will go to the Conjure person with an artifact of the person to be conjured. For a fee, the Conjure person will design a way to grant the wish. The motivation for a conjure, or a "goopher" as Chesnutt sometimes called it, might include revenge, protection, or matrimony. In this way, helpless slaves or Reconstruction blacks stripped of their civil rights could be part of a folk tradition in which dreams might come true. Chesnutt's folktale teller, Uncle Julius, uses his tales as a Conjure person uses spells--to try to trick his white boss into granting Julius' wishes.

Chesnutt added an elaborate frame depicting life in the post-Reconstruction South to the stories of conjuration. The frame forms a kind of "psycho-fictional" look at relationships between blacks and whites and those within a white family. With astounding insight, Chesnutt constructs the stereotype of the autocratic father figure of contemporary television's domestic comedies, a man more strongly committed to his life outside the home than to his life within it. He has abdicated his participation in creating human values to the woman of the house.

John, the narrator of the novel, is a Yankee entrepreneur who has moved to the South, ostensibly in search of a climate more amiable to his wife Annie's failing health. Actually, his business eye is keenly aware of opportunities for Yankee ingenuity to turn a profit, which he feels the "lazy" southern colonels have missed. Already involved in the grape culture in northern Ohio, John thought to continue this business in a warmer climate. After rejecting "sunny France, . . . sleepy Spain, . . . and Southern

[1]Charles Chesnutt, "Superstitions & Folklore of the South," *Modern Culture*, 13 (1901), pp. 231-35, reprinted in Alan Dundes, Ed., *Mother Wit from the Laughing Barrel* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1973), pp. 370-79.

California,"[2] John receives a letter from his brother in North Carolina, where he is informed that "labor was cheap, and land could be bought for a mere song." (p. 23) That settles it; John and Annie immediately move to the economically broken but readily exploitable South.

John represents Chesnutt's early recognition of the white man's withdrawal from a position of familial love and respect in favor of "rational" and financial pursuits. His hoodwinking by women and servants, who understand the life and death issues he has neglected, and their understanding of the metaphoric mysteries of conjuration, which establishes humanity's close ties with nature, have developed into a tradition still probed by contemporary commerical television series such as "Bewitched."

The post-Reconstruction setting also helps to expose the Civil War's failure to change the master-slave relationship between whites and blacks. Part of the purpose of Chesnutt's beguiling stories is to hoodwink the reader, as Uncle Julius tries to hoodwink John, into recognizing the black man's undeserved role of subservience that should be changed to a position of equality. In this sense, Chesnutt, too, is a kind of conjure man. However, Chesnutt was forced to soften his protest. His readers, unaware that they were reading the work of a black writer, regarded the stories as fancifully entertaining variants of the fashionable plantation story.

Actually, Chesnutt, as an outside observer, dictated by his position as a black intellectual in a racist society, could see the real structure of the white family far better than white observers could. He could see the patriarch removing himself and the reasons for it. This theme of the separation of heart (i.e., blacks and some white women) and head (white men) became a favorite of black writers during the Harlem Renaissance of the 1920's and remained current from Langston Hughes to Eldridge Cleaver and William Melvin Kelley. The white male, seeking power through economic manipulation, evolved in black writers' views from one who was merely misguided to one who was inhumane. As Cleaver put it in *Soul on Ice*:

> The white man turned the white woman into a weak-minded, delicate freak, a sex pot, and placed her on a pedestal; he turned the black woman into a strong, self reliant Amazon and deposited her in the kitchen--that's the secret of Aunt Jemima's bandanna. *The White Man turned himself into the Omnipotent Administrator and established himself in the Front Office.* And he turned the black man into the Supermasculine Menial and kicked him out into the fields.[3] [Italics mine.]

Today elements of the Women's Movement generally agrees with this view of the white man's developmental pattern.

Prior to the shifting attitudes of the 1970's, the white male could be expected to dissent from this interpretation. But, surprisingly, the image of

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[2]Charles Chesnutt, *The Conjure Woman* (Ann Arbor, Mich.,: University of Michigan Press, 1969), pp. 2-3. All further references will be to this edition and will be cited by page number in the text.

[3]Eldridge Cleaver, *Soul on Ice* (New York: Dell, 1969), p. 162.

the white man in the popular media began to agree with the image traditionally presented by black artists. A good example is that comic strip anti-hero, Dagwood Bumstead. All of Dagwood's energy is expended for Mr. Dithers so that when he comes home from work, he curls up on the couch and tries to avoid participation in any of the family's activities. He must be dragged from the couch and forced to do home maintenance chores, to spend time with Cookie and Alexander, or to go shopping with Blondie. In short, he tries to get out of everything except the fraternal fun of poker games at Herb Woodley's. The humor of the strip arises from his unsuccessful attempts to deceive Blondie. This characterization of the father was common in situation and domestic comedies of the 1950's and 1960's, such as the ironically titled "Father Knows Best," "Leave It to Beaver," and "I Love Lucy."

In these series, American family life was depicted as a contest between adversaries, each of whom did not dare reveal their plans or desires to the others for fear of being thwarted. The father especially came to be regarded as a potential barrier to the rest of the family's wishes, and his attitude precipatated elaborate schemes to keep him in the dark. This was largely true because the male was no longer really a part of the family unit. For one thing, he was away so often. For another, he was not interested in the concerns at home when he returned. Consequently, television writers began exploiting a situation for humor that black writers had long recognized as a threat to family relationships. What is most astounding about Charles Chesnutt is that he understood that situation prior to 1899 and depicted it, if only peripherally, in *The Conjure Woman*.

In Chesnutt's book, John's narration provides the frame for Uncle Julius' tales of conjuration. In a sense, Uncle Julius has squatters' rights to the plantation John purchases, for the ex-slave has been its sole resident since the Civil War. Unlike John, Julius does not ask the land to make him rich; he simply wants life's bare essentials from it. Grapes and honey provide Julius with the means to barter for the things he cannot make or grow. With John's arrival, Julius must relinquish his independence to become John's coachman and must witness the new master gradually repossessing all the things the old master has owned--the abandoned schoolhouse, the grape vines, the honey tree, and Julius' time. Julius' only defense is to spin his yarns in an effort to develop John's respect for the land. When it suits John to honor Julius' veiled requests, he does so. Otherwise, Julius' independence is at the mercy of John's plans for profit.

Although her presence is overtly revealed in only ten pages of the narration, John's wife Annie is the key to the psychological dynamics of the situation Chesnutt presents. John portrays himself as the self-assured moral and intellectual superior of his wife and his yarn-spinning coachman, yet details he perhaps unconsciously adds to the narration reveal that they exceed him in spiritual understanding and that they have a humane relationship which John can never share. John feels that he is a dutiful husband and that his concessions to his wife's whims are above and beyond his duty. However, there is evidence that his wife's illness is due to emotional neglect by John. There is further evidence that Julius understands the nature of Annie's illness and ministers to it far more effectively than does John.

At the beginning of "The Gray Wolf's Ha'nt," John and Annie are bored on a rainy afternoon. John attemps to amuse them both by reading aloud from a philosophy book. The passage he chooses is laced with abstract terms, and the

syntax is so complex that Annie soon begs him to give it up. John has not entertained her in the least. Suddenly Julius appears, and it is not long before he has launched into the story, encouraged by both John and Annie. As Annie says, "A story will be a godsend today." (p. 167) In this part of the frame, we can see John elevating himself as the intellectual superior to Annie, cooly condescending to spend some time with her. Although work is prohibited by the rain, John still spends the day pouring over accounts, and only toward the end of the story does he offer Annie his company. The philosophy passage *is* boring and inscrutable. The reader knows it and is shocked at John's outrageous hypocrisy when he thinks, "I had never been able to interest my wife in the study of philosophy, even when presented in the simplest and most lucid form." (p. 164) Yet even he is eager enough to give it up and listen to Julius' tale with Annie.

The tale which presents this proposition most clearly is "Sis Becky's Pickaninny." The catalyst for this story is Annie's illness, described as a "settled melancholy," and a "depression," (p. 133) which leaves her weak and hardly able to speak. Never is her ailment described as a disease or an injury, even by her attending physician. John and the doctor are baffled, but Julius seems to recognize the symptoms of chronic loneliness, so he tells the childless woman a tale of deep devotion between a mother and son. The tale performs the cure, and her condition "took a turn for the better from this very day," (p. 160) for Julius had fed her neglected spirit. Significantly, neither her white businessman husband nor the physician, the white man of science, could accurately diagnose her illness.

It is "Po' Sandy," the second story, that establishes the sense of community between Annie and Julius. The tale of a slave who would rather be a tree than be separated from his wife wrings a responsive cry from Annie:

> "What a system it was," she exclaimed, "under which such things were possible!"
>
> "What things?" I [John] asked in amazement. "Are you seriously considering the possibility of a man's being turned into a tree?"
>
> "Oh no," she replied quickly, "not that"; and then murmured absently and with a dim look in her fine eyes, "Poor Tenie!" (pp. 60-1)

Annie's outcry demonstrates two levels of response to the tale: she responds to the horrors of slavery on a social level and to the pall of loneliness on an individual level. Julius quickly recognizes his more sensitive listener and aims his tales at Annie. Furthermore, all of the other tales are love tales. If love is not their main focus, they at least make mention of a deep abiding relationship of the kind for which Annie longs but cannot achieve with John. Julius offers her vicarious emotional fulfillment through his stories and helps her to endure her situation with less agony. The aid is reciprocal, for Annie usually recognizes the veiled request for support represented by each tale and throws whatever influence she has on Julius' side.

This impression of Julius' empathy toward Annie is strengthened by the story, "Mars Jeems's Nightmare," whose white folks are analogous to John and Annie. Miss Libbie rejects Mars Jeems as a suitor because of his reputation for cruelty with his slaves; as Julius tells it, " . . . he mought git so useter 'busin' his niggers dat he'd mence ter 'buse his wife atter he got useter habbin' her roun' de house." (p. 73) As an allegory, a man like John,

accustomed to being businesslike and unfeeling in all his dealings, is likely to continue that pattern in his personal relationships, even with his wife. With this story Julius shows that he understands that the basis of Annie's illness is the empty emotional relationship between Annie and John.

Until the last story, Julius is the comic figure of the tales, but "Hot-Foot Hannibal" establishes John as the comic caricature. The addition of Annie's sister Mabel to the household and the fact that Mabel has become engaged to Malcolm Murchison, a local resident, seem to indicate that some time has elapsed before this tale begins. During that period of time, John seems to have become a mere figurehead in the family. The rest of the household does just as it likes, excluding John from their plans. In "Hannibal" John is duped by Julius, Annie, Mabel, and Malcolm. Julius' tale predisposes Mabel to regret her hasty quarrel with Malcolm and to seek reconciliation. Julius has managed to get the family on a road where they are likely to meet Malcolm, and all that remains is to get John, who might object, out of the way. John is sent on various errands until the young couple can have their private reunion.

This story defines Annie's changed attitude toward John, for she never considers telling him the truth about the delays in their drive. Apparently, they all have come to realize that John is insensitive to the delicate aspects of human relationships. Moreover, his astounding ignorance of the romantic situation of which all the characters and the reader are keenly aware sets him up as the prototype of the foolishly blind father so popular in television's domestic comedies. Thus was the ironic circle, set up by Chestnutt's presentation of a superficially strong husband in the earliest of the stories, completed.

The element of magic further underscores this portrait of John. Because the stories are centered on conjuration, John misses their basic themes, for he understands only the most preposterous elements, thus losing sight of the moral or spiritual point. Rather than acknowledge Julius as a true folk artist, John dismisses him as a scheming opportunist. The almost pantheistic orientation which brings Julius into mystical contact with nature and with Annie is alien to John, and his refusal to take seriously tales which use elements of magic begins his alienation from the spiritual community.

Darren Stevens of "Bewitched" could well be a descendant of John. That Samantha is a witch with true magical powers is a *donnee* of the series, and Darren believes in her witchcraft. But he does not understand it and, more important, he cannot control it, so he forbids her to use it. He wants to lead a "normal"--i.e., respectable, bourgeois--life. Like John, Darren is a businessman first, more concerned with pleasing clients and closing deals than with devoting himself to his wife and home. Periodically, Samantha is forced to use her magic, as Julius uses his tales of magic, to remind Darren of his human priorities, occasionally to save him from himself, and to ultimately prevent him from taking advantage of her.

In one typical episode Darren expects Samantha to endure the obnoxious advances of a business Romeo because he wants nothing to jeopardize the consummation of their deal. In desperation, Samantha finally turns the cocktail-party cavalier into a little dog. Mindful of her promise not to use witchcraft, Samantha cannot tell Darren who the pesky cur really is; Darren turns him out of the house; and Samantha, unwilling to let the businessman remain a stray, pursues him to his refuge in a garbage can, arousing great

curiosity among the neighbors and police and, of course, laughs on the sound track. But when the plot is analyzed, stripped of the laugh track, we see an advertising executive willing to sacrifice his wife's respect, perhaps even to make her a prostitute, in order to please a client.[4]

Like Julius, Samantha tries to use magic to open Darren's eyes, to teach him. Like John, Darren learns only for the moment, and he is back where he started at the beginning of each new episode.

In other domestic comedies, the family configuration is the same. The father has apparent power and authority but, in fact, neither knows nor influences the developing situations. He is an executive--an insurance saleman like Jim Anderson of "Father Knows Best," an architect like Uncle Bill of "Family Affair"--or a management figure in some unnamed but archetypal business like Ward Cleaver of "Leave It to Beaver," who often has to work Saturdays, causing him to cancel outings with his sons. These men provide a nice suburban home or a swanky Central Park apartment for their families, but they do not provide the emotional sustenance, the understanding, or concern of their counterparts in the kitchen. It is Margaret Anderson, June Cleaver, and the feminine influence of Mr. French which provides the moral encouragement and emotional stability for these families. From their kitchen headquarters, they dispense tea and sympathy--soothing hurt feelings, healing wounded pride, and correcting wrong impressions. They may also point out to the father the folly of his hasty decisions; but never, never do they dispel the illusion of father's leadership.

In recent years producers have tried to vary the domestic comedy formula to breathe new life into it. A show like "Maude," which centers around the basic male-female roles, in which Maude tries to be authoritarian and Walter provides sympathetic behind-the-scenes wisdom, draws humor from its reversal of the situation we have come to expect, thus confirming the basic sterotype. Although the "Mary Tyler Moore Show" does not focus on a biological family, its characters are analogous to the family configurations in the domestic comedy, as Horace Newcomb has pointed out.[5] Lou Grant is a parody of the conventional father, Mary provides motherly softness and guidance, and Ted Baxter is the adolescent son. However, the short-lived "We'll get By," a newer show, brought the pattern full circle, playing exactly like "Father Knows Best," except that the sexes of the children are reversed, and all the characters sound like Hawkeye Pierce of "M*A*S*H*."

That this kind of family arrangement is entirely associated with white culture in the popular mind as presented on television can be demonstrated by a look at perhaps the only early black show, "Amos and Andy," in comparison to a late, decadent one like "The Jeffersons." Even though "Amos and Andy" was a white man's stereotype of black life, it was clearly different from "Father Knows Best," or "Ozzie and Harriet." Sapphire was both the moral and authoritarian center of the family, while the Kingfish was more like the trickster of Conjure man or Brer Rabbit fame. George Jefferson's problem is that, while he rather defensively expresses black pride, he wants to be exactly

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[4] *Save the Tiger*, which won Jack Lemmon an Oscar, supports this view by depicting the businessman as pimp much more explicitly.

[5] Horace Newcomb, *TV, The Most Popular Art* (Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor Books, 1974), p. 51.

like his white professional counterpart, making himself a black parody of Cleaver's "Omnipotent Administrator." Louise must continually remind him that there is value in gentleness, tact, and love. Like Darren Stevens, George will do anything to impress a client or strengthen a business connection.

The Conjure Woman is set during the era when America was completing the transition from an agricultural economy to a business economy. While others were writing of the titans and financiers and their effects on the business and moral spheres, Chesnutt studies the effect of the businessman's tactics when he turned his attention to farming. Perhaps it was inevitable that this dedication to efficiency and profit would carry over into the businessman's relationships with his family and his workers.

Charles Chesnutt's interest in the future of his newly freed people, which was being threatened by men like John, brought about his recognition of the spiritual crippling of the white man that would lead to the one-dimensional caricatures we see today in figures like Darren Stevens. The white man's unenviable position forced him to move his area of fulfillment from home to office. Chesnutt, as a black intellectual permitted only limited access to white life, had the objectivity to observe the beginning of this phenomenon and to record it in his first published book, *The Conjure Woman*.